



James Foster, D.D.

A SECOND

LETTER

TO

Dr. STEBBING.

S I R,



SHALL not trouble the world; or you, with any *apology* for reviving a controversy that has so long lain dormant. My reasons for not writing sooner are *personal* things, that cannot affect any part of the argument, and are of very little importance to the public: And with thinking men, the *time* when an answer is given, is not the material point, but whether it be *solid* and convincing. Being determined therefore to avoid all formal *excuses*, and little insignificant *janglings*, I assure you, that you may *exult* on this occasion

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as much as you please, and take, for the future, what *liberties* you shall think proper, with respect to your style and manner of writing, without any *animadversions* on my part: Which are the more unnecessary, because, in all such cases, every candid and ingenuous reader will easily make, without my help, the *natural* and *just* reflections.

But whatever opinion I may have of these *extraneous* and *circumstantial* matters, the subject of HERESY is of two great consequence to be entirely dropp'd in silence: Since nothing has been *so universally* the occasion of those violent and unwarrantable abuses of *church-power*, which have proved so fatal to truth, and peace, and all moral virtues; and been highly scandalous to *religion*, and prejudicial to *civil societies*. The principal question in debate between us is, Who are the *Heretics* spoken of and condemned in the New Testament, and whom *St. Paul* hath particularly described, and directed *Titus* to reject? To an impartial discussion of which I shall directly proceed, before I meddle with the less material, and more remote, parts of the controversy.

And you will give me leave, Sir, as it is in it self a thing of perfect indifference, to begin with re-examining *your* account of Heresy; in order to which, I shall state it in your own words. In your first Letter, *pag.* 25, 26. you say, " That
 " they who to the ministers of Christ shall *ap-*
 " *pear* by the best use of their judgments, under
 " the direction of God's word, to have departed
 " from the faith, whether *with* knowledge or
 " *against* knowledge, whether *sincerely* or *insin-*
 " *cere*ly,



“ *cerely*, are to them heretics, and must by them
 “ be treated as such.” Accordingly it will fol-
 low, by your own confession, “ that a man may
 “ be a heretic to *one* church, who is not a here-
 “ tic to *another* ; and a heretic to *both*, who is
 “ not a heretic to *God*.” In your second Let-
 ter, pag. 30. you explain your self thus, to the
 same purpose : “ The question is, *what is heresy* ?
 “ I say, an *open departure* from the faith, whe-
 “ ther *with* or *against* conscience, is *heresy*. But
 “ how then, you ask, is a heretic *self-condemn’d* ?
 “ I answer, by publishing *his own* OFFENCE ;
 “ by declaring *openly* that *departure* from the
 “ faith, for which the church *adjudges* him wor-
 “ thy to be rejected.” This agrees with what
 you had asserted before, that “ in this case he
 “ becomes his own accuser, and with his own
 “ mouth proclaims himself an offender against
 “ the order and discipline of the church. * ” You
 tell me further, that this, *viz.* That he is *an*
offender against the order and discipline of the
church, you “ think to be the meaning of St.
 “ Paul’s words, when he saith, A heretic SIN-
 “ NETH ---- who considers a heretic not as of-
 “ fending against *conscience* (of which the church
 “ is not judge) but as *departing* from the *de-*
 “ *clared terms* of communion. † ” I shall con-
 clude this short account of your scheme, with a
 very remarkable *concession* which you have been
 forced to make, and that is, “ That WHOEVER
 “ THINKS that the church is departed from the
 “ apostolic doctrine, is under the same obligation
 “ to reject *the church*----as the church is to reject

* First Letter, p. 17.

† Second Letter, p. 72.

“ *him. ‡* ” In consequence of which, you must come closer to the point, as I stated it, and allow farther, That if the body of the *christian people*, in their COLLECTIVE capacity, judge the *governours* and *pastors* of the church to oppose publicly the apostolic doctrine, they are obliged to reject, i. e. *to excommunicate* them, and put themselves under the care of *other* pastors. And I can't help declaring, that I think the public acknowledgment you have made (from whence this consequence directly follows) to be an *extraordinary* point gained, and you will permit me to make the proper use of it.

Before I pass on to consider particularly how you have defended your notion of heresy, I shall put St. *Paul's* words, in his epistle to *Titus*, and a paraphrase of them, fairly deduced from your avowed principles, in opposite columns: And if you please, Sir, and think it will advance your character as a critic, you may go on to write a commentary upon the whole New Testament, after the manner of *this specimen*.

St. *Paul's* words. St. *Paul's* sense, according to
Dr. *Stebbing*.

A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject:

Know-

A man that is an heretic, i. e. a man that does not believe as the church believes---as the Bishops and ministers of the church, or as the body of the christian people, believe; this man, whether he be sincere or

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insincere; whether his error be *with conscience, or against conscience, voluntary, or involuntary*; do thou----and, after thee, let all *Bishops, and ministers, and christian people*----*reject*----If he be the most upright, pious, and *conscientious* man alive, let him not be spared, if he espouses doctrines contrary to the articles and creeds of the church: for he ought to be accounted and treated as a *heretic* by the church, merely for having the presumption to oppose what the church believes.

Knowing, that he that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

And I prescribe this rule of conduct, because, though he should happen to be the *best christian* upon earth, and maintains *pure and primitive christianity*, in opposition to the errors and superstitions of a *corrupt and antichristian church*----*thou knowest*, and all *ministers, and church-governours, and christian people*, in future times, will know *notwithstanding*; that----let him be ever so much in the way of his *duty, of truth, and righteousness, and salvation*, he is *subverted, and sinneth*, i. e. is an *offender against the order and discipline of the church,*

*church, to which, however, he is not obliged to submit**; and is *condemned of himself*, i. e. though *his own conscience* applauds him as entirely innocent, and maintaining a right cause, yet by *openly abetting doctrines, which the church thinks to be false, he publishes his own offence*; and consequently *accuses, and gives evidence against himself*, not indeed of really departing from the faith, but of openly abetting doctrines which *the church explains* to be departing from the faith---- And thus he becomes *the means, or instrument* (whether justly or unjustly it matters not) of *his own condemnation*.

* By the order and discipline of the church, against which the heretic is an offender, I suppose you mean some law or rule of church-order and discipline. Otherwise, I think, you are quite unintelligible. Now you tell us in another place, that *the judgment of the church is the rule for discipline*; First Letter, p. 28. By offending therefore against the order and discipline of the church, is meant offending against the judgment of the church. But can any person be said to be a sinner (even as you have chosen to express it elsewhere, *with respect to the act materially considered*) by offending against the rule of discipline, which is the church's judgment, if he is not obliged, in every such case, i. e. with respect to all matters of faith, to submit absolutely to this same rule of discipline, that is, to the church's judgment? or unless he be bound at least, not to espouse openly any opinions which are repugnant to the church's judgment. And will you take upon you to vindicate this fundamental principle, and main support of Popery? I hope not: and therefore you must allow these words, *To which he is not obliged to submit*, the words that the marginal note refers to, to be candidly inserted in the paraphrase.

This,

This, Sir, upon your scheme, is the genuine explication of St. *Paul's* direction to *Titus*; which you will think it fit perhaps to disclaim, but not find it so easy to evade. I now proceed to consider how you have defended your account of heresy, from the force of the arguments which I brought against it.

I objected to it, in the first place, that it “has not the least foundation in Scripture;” and that “the texts you have alleged to support your notion of heresy, and prove that the power of separating heretics from christian fellowship has ever been a *standing* power in *all* churches, say not a syllable — of *heresy*, or *heretics*.” To this objection, which, if it be just, must overturn your whole scheme, you have given a very slight, but most extraordinary answer: NO MATTER *for that*, Sir * — No matter for what? Is it *no matter* whether you have wrote pertinently, or not; whether you have proved your point, or not? No; it seems this is not at all *material*, and for this reason, because though these texts say not a syllable of *heresy*, they speak of *something else* that runs more in your head; *they speak plainly and expressly of oppugners of the christian doctrine* †: And you are pleased to tell me, that if I will grant *that such were to be separated from christian fellowship*, I may take the WORDS *heresy*, and *heretics*, and *dispose* them as I please; i. e. in truth, if I will allow you a *foreign* point, you will give up the point in *controversy*. This, Sir, is an instance of indulgence

* Second Letter, p. 39.

† Ibid.

and condescension that I could not expect from you ; but I can by no means consent to the condition you have stipulated for me, being resolved, for the present, neither to grant, nor deny, that *the oppugners of the christian doctrine are to be rejected from christian communion*, for the reason already suggested ; because 'tis entirely *remote* from the subject in debate between us---For the point you are to prove is not, that the oppugners of the christian doctrine are to be separated from christian fellowship ; but this only, that all oppugners of the christian doctrine, *merely as oppugners of the christian doctrine*, are the heretics whom St. Paul advises *Titus* to reject. I repeat it again, that the single question, which we are debating, is, who are *these heretics*, not who are to be debarred from the communion of the church. And if you had demonstrated as plainly (as I shall hereafter shew you have failed in every part of your proof) that men may be rejected for *some errors* in faith, you could have gained no advantage by it ; because every one must see, that though I myself should acknowledge this, my notion of heresy may be true *notwithstanding*---For 'tis surely as possible in the nature of things, that some may be rejected for their *errors* (as that others may for their *vices*) and yet not be the *scripture-heretics*.

There are several things to this purpose in my first Letter, which you have thought fit to pass by without the least notice. I must therefore desire the reader to turn to the passages themselves, because they contain the true state of the argument : And I now beg leave to subjoin to the observations

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vations which I formerly made *, that upon reviewing and considering the matter more carefully, I can see no reason to believe, that departing from the faith is at all *essential* to the character and guilt of a *heretic*.---*In the nature of the thing itself*, it is not essential.--- For *sects*, or *heresies*, may be formed about *rituals*, about things in themselves *indifferent*, and *confess'd* to be indifferent, as well as about points of *doctrine*. And if the leaders of these sects, tho' they pretend to aim at the advancement of religion, by introducing greater solemnity, order, and decency in the public worship, know, themselves, that they mean nothing but *interest*, or to gratify their *ambition* and *vanity*, and consequently act against their inward *convictions*; they may justly be described, let them be ever so orthodox in matters of MERE FAITH, as factious, *ill-designing*, *self-condemned heretics*, or *sectaries* †. The heretics I now speak of can no more be said *to depart from the faith*, than any other notorious sinners, who contradict, by their behaviour, principles which they profess to *believe*. But this is not the proper meaning of the phrase itself, nor what you mean by departing from the faith; which you have all along distinguished from immoralities and *errors in practice*.

Let us now see how this matter stands upon the foot of *Scripture*. There is but *one* passage

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 54.

† It may, perhaps, be proper for me to declare, in order to prevent reproach and insult, that I have put this only as a *possible* case in the mere *reason of the thing* (which it most certainly is) without designing any particular reflections.

in all the New Testament, where the heretic's character is *expresly* and *professedly* given : This is in the Epistle to *Titus*. There, again, there is but *one* phrase that can be thought to afford the least intimation, that 'tis strictly *essential* to the notion of a heretic, that he depart from the faith ; and that is, --- he *is subverted*. But 'tis plain, that the word itself has only a general meaning, and signifies no more than that he is *perverted*, or *turned out of the way*. And this surely he may be, by departing in his *practice*, tho' he *openly espouses no opinions repugnant to the faith*, from the way of piety, peace, and integrity *. And as for other passages, which may speak of the oppugners of the christian doctrine, they none of them say (as they must to support your scheme) either that all such, *merely as such*, are to be consider'd as *heretics* ; or, that this is *necessarily* included in the idea of a *heretic*.---It remains then, I think, as a fair conclusion from the whole, that to depart from the faith, or publicly maintain doctrines contrary to christianity, is not absolutely *essential* to the character of a heretic, either from REASON, or SCRIPTURE.

* In my Sermon I paraphrased these words, a heretic *is subverted*, thus, *He is turned aside from the true faith*. But the learned reader will see, that there was no solid foundation for this paraphrase, and I my self am fully convinced of it. And thinking it, in controversial writings, an act of *justice* to the public, to acknowledge an error of which I am convinced, I take this only opportunity, which I have at present, to correct every thing both in the Sermon and in my first Letter, that intimates departing from the faith, or maintaining doctrines contrary to christianity, to be *a necessary part* of the *heretic's* character, whom St. *Paul* hath condemn'd. It is almost needless to add, that this alteration is not owing to any thing in your reasoning ; the *whole* of which it directly opposes.

I have another very important thing behind, which I intimated to you likewise in my first Letter, and that is, that the greatest part of your texts speak only of *immoralities*, and mention not a word about *departing from the faith*; so that you might as well have produced them to prove that *drunkenness*, or *murder*, is heresy, as to serve the purpose you intend by them. Certainly, Sir, turbulent and factious men, who *serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly*, may cause divisions and scandals*, contrary to the *christian doctrine* which condemns these things, or to the rules of the gospel relating to *unity and peace*, without openly espousing errors in faith. Another person might walk disorderly †, contrary to the tradition which he received of the apostle, and obey not his word; i. e. he might be an immoral man (as St. Paul himself directly explains it) *not working at all*, but a *busy body* ‡; and yet be in profession sound in the faith. To what purpose then are these texts quoted, which have no relation at all to the argument? And what say the other passages, on which you lay so great a stress? --- 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. relates only to the case of *incest*, and, by a parity of reason, to other *immoralities* of a like scandalous nature. --- 2 Tim. ii. 16, &c. exhorts to *shun profane and vain babblings*; speaks of a *word that will eat as doth a canker*; of Hymeneus, and Philetus, *who concerning the truth have erred, saying, that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some*; &c. Therefore --- what follows? --- It does not appear that this text speaks of

* Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

† 2 Thess. iii. 6, 11, 14.

Church-discipline. And your reasoning here must stand thus: That because the ERRORS of the most gross corrupters of christianity in its *essential articles*, errors tending to licentiousness in *practice*, are to be *shunn'd*; and the *private christian* is exhorted to *purge himself* (i. e. to keep himself from the infection) of those who espoused such *immoral* principles: therefore *every one* that departs from the faith, is, *without distinction*, and tho' his errors are of *quite another kind* from the particular errors here mentioned, to be separated from outward and *public* communion in christian societies. This itself is excellent *logic*. But if any want to be informed, how it is proved that every one is a *heretic* that departs from the faith, whether *sincerely*, or *insincerely*, whether *with conscience*, or *against conscience*; this, which is the main point, must be taken for granted: And then the evidence will be complete. --- The only text that seems to look plausible on your side is, 2 Ep. *John* 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.* But what is the doctrine here referred to? The context plainly informs us that 'tis this, that *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*, ver. 7. If any one *confess not* this doctrine, he is a *deceiver*, and an *anticrist*. He *transgresseth*, and *abideth not in the doctrine of Christ*, i. e. is an *apostate* from christianity itself, and *hath not God*. And if there come any unto you, and bring not THIS DOCTRINE, receive him not into your house, &c.---So that, according to you, because we are not to shew countenance in our own houses, or wish success, to *infidels* and

and *apostates*, therefore such as are neither *infidels*, nor *apostates*, such as sincerely reverence the authority of Christ, (merely because they have the misfortune to give a wrong explication of some of his doctrines) are, together with the most immoral and scandalous offenders, *absolutely*, and *without distinction*, to be avoided and rejected by the church. You may observe, Sir, upon the whole, that the passages which you have produc'd prove nothing at all to your purpose; not so much as *your own point*, that all oppugners of the christian doctrine are, *without distinction*, to be separated from christian fellowship; and much less do they prove *the point in controversy*, that all such oppugners are, *without distinction*, heretics: Nor consequently have they any relation (tho' they are the only passages that you have cited to support this act of church-discipline) to the rejecting all such as *heretics* from the communion of the church.

I might safely rest the matter here. But as I have offered several other objections against your scheme, I am obliged to consider in what manner you have replied to them. *Some* of these objections, you say, you do not understand; *others*, you seem to think, you do understand, and have therefore quoted; and to *a few scraps*, curtailed, and altered, and partially represented, you have given most *indolent* and sententious answers, which sometimes made me doubt whether you was really in earnest. But of this I leave others to judge, and shall now review both the *intelligible*, and *unintelligible*, part of the objections.

With

With respect to those, which, you say, *you do not understand*, you have chosen to surprize the reader, by telling him at the same time, that *you are very sure they are not worth being understood*—How is this?—Can you be certain, without *understanding* a thing, that it is not *worth being understood*? Or is nothing *intelligible* but what you understand? Or nothing but what you understand *worth being understood*? Before you can justly affirm of any objections, that *they are not worth being understood*, you must be able to prove, that they are trifling and remote from the argument; *i. e.* you must *understand* them in some measure—But this, you say, *you do not*. I shall now point out what these unintelligibles are; and let the world determine, whether the fault really lay *in your understanding*, or not.

The first thing, then, that you would be thought *not to understand*, is this, that “ unless
“ the particular instances of faith, to depart from
“ which constitutes the *sin* of heresy, be clearly
“ defined and distinctly enumerated, the phrase
“ [departing from the faith] can have no *fixed*
“ meaning at all; but must signify only this,
“ what *particular churches*, or the *ministers*, or go-
“ *vernours*, of particular churches, *think* to be de-
“ parting from the faith *,”—*i. e.* in other words,
It must signify something uncertain and variable,
and *inconsistent with itself*, and can convey no
uniform *determinate* idea.

The next thing that confounds your understanding, and is, therefore, *not worth being un-*

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 5.

derstood, is a natural and undeniable consequence from the foregoing; *viz.* "That the christian religion hath given us a *general account* of heresy, by which we can form *no notion* of the true precise nature of heresy * --- *i. e.* If departing from the faith hath no *uniform* sense, heresy, which in your opinion is nothing else but departing from the faith, can have no *uniform* meaning likewise; and we have *no rule* by which to judge who are heretics, but what always has been, and ever will be, *various* and *self-contradictory*.

Again, if the *particular instances* of faith, in an open departure from which the *essence* of heresy consists, be not plainly pointed out, and particularly specified in the New Testament, and consequently, if the phrase departing from the faith can have no *fixed* meaning, "it will follow; That the christian religion hath prescribed a *rule*, by which to frame a judgment of heresy, that ultimately resolves itself into *fancy* and *conjecture* †" --- or, which is the same, Every man, having no more than a rule of words, the meaning of which is not clearly stated and defined, is left by the gospel without *any certain rule at all*, and must frame the *sense*, which alone is the *RULE* for himself. This most essential point, or, to speak more properly, *the rule itself*, must be "determined by *wisdom* or *folly*, as either of these happen to preside; by *enthusiasm* and *blind zeal*; by *ambition*, *selfishness*, and *craft*." --- But this, as well as the rest, ex-

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 5.

† Ibid. p. 55.

ceeds your comprehension: And yet can any thing be more intelligible and obvious?—You yourself seem to allow in one place †, that *all* departings from the faith are not heresy. *What kind* of departing from the faith is it then? Or how shall we *know* it, if the Scripture be absolutely silent about it? Why nothing remains but that we must *guess* at it, and find it out as well as we can. If it happens, that we have good judgment and sincerity, these must help us to grope the better *in the dark*; otherwise ignorance, passion, and prejudice may raise a *clamour*, and suggest what they please to be *heresy*.—And is this the *rational* plan, upon which the visible church of Christ is to be formed? Will it persuade *infidels* to become members of it? If the case stands thus, and the visible church be a society held together by *we know not what*, the consequence must be, not merely as an *accidental* abuse, but *in the nature of things*, confusion and inconsistency. And it must be supposed moreover, that though Christ hath made no provision, in his religion, for any tenderness and indulgence to be shewn to *involuntary error*; he hath put it in the power of the ambitious and insolent, the crafty and hypocritical professors of his gospel, to insult and stain the best of his disciples — *to serve their wicked purposes*. This, again, is not an *accidental* abuse, but springs directly *from the nature of the thing itself*: For if we are left in the *dark* as to what that departing from the faith means, in which heresy is supposed to consist, and yet are commanded, without being clearly instructed in the nature of he-

† Second Letter, p. 75. under the second head.

resy,

refy; to *avoid* and *censure* hereties; innumerable mistakes and false judgments must *necessarily* follow; and an handle is *directly* given to those who have *particular ends* to serve by it, to impose upon the ignorant, and disgrace the honest and inquisitive, by outcries and alarms of HERESY. This is the very scheme that such persons, if it had been left to their *discretion*, would have contrived for themselves, as being, of all others, the best adapted to promote their *views*; and therefore I hope, Sir, you will recollect yourself, and no longer insist on its being a part of the doctrine of CHRIST, who was an open enemy to all *craft* and *oppression*.

Once more: There is another passage in my Letter, which, as it is entirely dropt, I shall be so candid as to rank among *the things hard to be understood*, and that relates to the *tendency* of your notion of heresy, and the *views*, with which (without breach of charity) it may be thought to be advanced and propagated --- “ * What *christian* purposes your notion of heresy may serve, “ I know not; but this appears plainly enough, “ that it is directly calculated to establish the DO- “ MINION and INDEPENDENCY of the church. “ Every one (according to your account) is a heretic, that departs from the faith—And all those “ [be they KINGS, or PRINCES, or of whatever “ RANK or CHARACTER] *that shall appear to “ the ministers of Christ to have departed from the “ faith, must by them be treated as HERETICS; “ i. e. be EXCOMMUNICATED.*” --- This doc-

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 66.

trine, Sir, has often shook the *thrones* of *Kings*, and, in dark and barbarous ages, been the chief pillar and support of *Papal* tyranny.—For
 “ whenever the people have been brought to re-
 “ vere and stand in awe of this *hereticating* power,
 “ and to conceive a proper resentment against HE-
 “ RETICAL and EXCOMMUNICATED Princes;
 “ it has been found a matter of no great diffi-
 “ culty to establish an ABSOLUTE and INDEPEN-
 “ DENT authority in the church, oppressive and
 “ fatal to civil government. ”

I come now to the objections, which you seem to think you *do understand*. The first is, That, according to your account of heresy, “ it will fol-
 “ low, that christianity hath prescribed a rule,
 “ by which *truth* and *error*, the *best* and the
 “ *worst* of men, are equally exposed to church-
 “ censures and excommunications *.” The mean-
 ing of this I beg leave to explain a little more particularly—Heresy, you say, is *an open departure from the faith*: And this departure from the faith is a loose *indeterminate* phrase, the meaning of which is not at all fixed in scripture, but left absolutely, without any discriminating marks to judge by, to the *opinion* and *conjecture* of particular churches. If therefore these churches are *all fallible*; if it was quite *unreasonable to expect*, and next to *impossible*, that they should *all* agree in *one* notion of departing from the faith; it must then follow, not by *accident*, but from *the very nature of the rule itself*, which you have laid down for judging of heresy, “ That *truth* and *error*,
 “ the *best* and the *worst* of men, will be equally

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 56.

“ exposed

“ exposed to church censures and excommunications.” While this rule *subsists*, it is an *iniquity* not to be avoided; they are, and will be, and *must be* treated alike. And can that be an *equitable* rule, that leaves *no room* for making a proper distinction between the good and bad, the upright and the insincere?—Can it be the CHRISTIAN rule?—If there be any rule of christian communion at all, one would think it a first and essential point, that it should provide effectually *against* the exclusion of the BEST of men, and the BEST of christians; but, on the contrary, the rule you have proposed is so framed *in itself*, as to provide effectually *for* their exclusion; and equally too with the exclusion of others, who are the greatest scandal to their profession. This, Sir, is the objection enlarged, and more distinctly stated. And all the reply you have made to it, is by *allowing* the consequence *thus far*, as to say, *That when churches err in the faith (as they may) those who are on the side of truth will be subject to excommunications**. If when you acknowledge that churches *may*, you had added, and frequently *do*, and it is highly probable *always will* err concerning the faith, in some point or other which they judge to be *essential*, at least, to *christian fellowship*; the *consequence* would then have been *plain*, just as I have stated it. And it must have appeared farther, that from the nature of *the rule it self*, a man not only *may*, but *will*, be a heretic to *one church*, who is not so to *another*; and a heretic to *both*, who is not a heretic to *God*. So that it

* Second Letter, p. 77.

is a rule, that hath no more of *consistent meaning*, than it hath of *equity*; but falshood and contradictions will *necessarily* follow from it.

My objections proceed thus; That according to your notion of heresy it will follow, "That christianity hath prescribed *a rule* [for censuring and rejecting heretics] by acting upon which, so *dark* and *indeterminate* as it is, even a wise man might have foreseen, and the eternal source of wisdom could not but foresee, that the right of conscience would be often *violated*; an impartial study of the holy scriptures *discouraged*; integrity *insulted*, and *oppressed*; and all but those, who believe as the CHURCH believes, be *branded* with marks of *infamy* *." Here I must again beg the reader to observe, that I have represented these inconveniences not as mere *accidental* abuses, but as *natural* and *unavoidable* consequences from the indeterminateness and obscurity of the rule itself ---- consequences that *a wise man might have foreseen*, and which *the eternal source of wisdom could not but foresee*. Let us now see in what manner you have replied to the several branches of this objection.

To this, that "the right (or rights) of conscience will be often *violated*," you answer thus; *The right of conscience (if by it you mean that right, which every man has to act according to his conscience) is not violated, but confirmed, by this account.* ---- This is strange indeed, but how doth it appear? Why you tell us, that *a right in the church to act according to her conscience, does not destroy, but suppose a right in*

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 56.

every man to *act according to his conscience* *. Upon which I observe first, That the very same thing might be pleaded, if the church's conscience lead her to *persecute*, viz. *that a right in the church to act according to her conscience does not violate, because it supposes, a right in every man to act according to his conscience.* If the church persecutes (or, which comes to the same, instigates the civil magistrate to persecute) by FINES and PECUNIARY MULCTS, a conscientious man, *he may still act according to his conscience, as directed by God's word*: i. e. If his conscience, as directed by God's word, warns him to *recant*, he *may do it*, and by that means, perhaps, be delivered from the cruelty of his persecutors; but if it be directed to *suffering*, he may arm himself with patience, and go on to *suffer* resolutely. And, to use your own words, *So he ought: For God's word is every man's rule, and the judgment of the church binds none but herself.* The meaning of which seemingly generous and modest concession amounts to no more than this, that a man is not bound indeed always to *approve* of the judgment and conduct of the church, either in *excommunicating*, or *persecuting*, but may, if he pleases, proceed in his own way, and take the *consequences* of it; and being allowed this *liberty*, he can have no just cause to complain that his natural right of acting according to his conscience is at all *violated*, by any *hardships which he is forced to undergo for conscience sake*—I observe, secondly, that the whole strength of your answer lies in these words, *That a right in the church to act according to her*

* Second Letter, p. 78.

conscience does not destroy, but suppose (i. e. does not destroy because it supposes) a right in every man to act according to his conscience. But how does it *suppose* a right in every man to act according to his conscience? Why only thus: It supposes it to subsist in *equity*, and in the *reason* of things; and notwithstanding this it may *in fact* be *violated*; nay, it may, *in fact* be *destroyed*. So that your inserting the word *destroy*, instead of the word *violate* (whether it was done through mistake, or by design) can be of no manner of service to you. Your argument is still fallacious, and has not the least *colour* of an answer to the objection, which was this, that, upon your scheme, it must *necessarily* happen, that the right of conscience would, *in fact*, be *often violated*—against the *nature, reason, and truth* of things. I shall only add, in the last place, That one of the *natural rights* of conscience is, in my judgment, most evidently *violated*, when a person *suffers* for his opinion *wrongfully*; because, in every instance of this kind, the conscientious man has a *natural claim* to protection from suffering, and to be allowed to exercise the *right* of judging for himself, and acting according to his conscience, without *impediment, or molestation*. Or if it should be thought, that *no right of conscience* is hereby violated, but *another* of his *rights*, on account of his pursuing the dictates of *conscience*; though I think I have stated the matter justly, I shall not be inclined to dispute this point, since, my objection is equally *strong* either way: For *one* of these you yourself must allow. Nor can you deny that a conscientious man *suffers wrongfully*, when he is
unjustly

unjustly excommunicated. But this iniquity will, not by *chance*, but *unavoidably*, happen, and, of course, either one of the *rights of conscience*, or which amounts to much the same, *another natural right* will be on the account of conscience *unavoidably violated*, by acting upon the rule which you have proposed for rejecting heretics; by which, as has been shewn, and that from the very nature of the rule itself, “ *truth and error, the best and the worst of men, are equally subjected to church censures and excommunications.*”

It was farther objected, that “ *integrity will be insulted and oppressed, and an impartial study of the holy scriptures discouraged.*” To this you answer; *Integrity insulted, and oppressed! By what, or by whom? Not by the church, which by declaring her sentence neither insults or oppresses. Bad men may insult those whom the church rejects, but with this neither the church, nor my account of the powers of the church, are justly chargeable.* — *Where also is the oppression? The church, we will suppose, is in an error, and excludes you unworthily: How are you hurt? Not in your body, or in your goods; For the church hath nothing to do with either of them: Her sentence affects them not, but only your state with respect to outward and visible communion. Are you hurt then as to your spiritual concerns? Nor this; For the sentence of the church can be no bar to God's favour*.* I cannot but say, Sir, that you have here made very great and noble *concessions*, which excite in me an agreeable mixture of pleasure and sur-

* Second Letter, p. 79.

prize. I count it a sort of *victory* to have drawn them from you ; and think myself amply *recompenced* for all the pains I have taken, or may hereafter take, in this controversy. Let me have the satisfaction to review, and recapitulate, and present these concessions to the reader in form. --- None but BAD men will *insult* those, whom the *church* rejects as *heretics*---The *church* has *nothing* to do with your *body*, or with your *goods*---Her *sentence* only affects your state, with respect to *outward* and *visible* communion---But *it hurts* you *not at all* as to your *spiritual concerns* ; nor can be *any bar* to God's favour.-----All this Dr. STEBBING himself either directly *allows*, or clearly and strongly *intimates* : And by so doing, he has stripped the excommunicating sentence of the church of all its *real terror*, and represented it as a thing so entirely *harmless* and *innocent*, that an honest man, following the directions of his conscience, must be either *weak* or *superstitious* to a high degree if he is much *scared* and *daunted* by it. --- But yet, Sir, be pleased to reflect a little. Is the opprobrious name of heretic, and the being stigmatized by an undeserved mark of infamy, no *insult* ? If christian communion be a *privilege*, must not the debarring truly conscientious and upright christians from it, and treating them publickly as if they were persons unworthy of it, be both a high *insult*, and a grievous act of *oppression* ? Or is no man *oppressed*, who is not hurt in his BODY or in his GOODS ? Is he not *hurt*, when he is wrongfully censured, and openly disgraced, and deprived of privileges to which he has the justest claim ? Are these things

no discouragement to the impartial study of the holy scriptures? Are they not calculated to *cramp* free enquiries, and to *terrify* and *bias* the mind? Do not all our knowledge and experience of human nature, and the history of mankind in all ages teach us, that they have a *general* and very *prevailing* influence? Or can you *really* think, that nothing is a *discouragement*, but the *secular arm's* interposing to *support the censures of the church*? I am very glad to find, indeed, that you speak of *excommunication* as in its original *simplicity*, when it is *stripped of these appendages*, i.e. the terrors of the *secular arm*; but I want still to be informed, whether you suppose PECUNIARY MULCTS of *sixpence in the pound*, or any other sum the magistrate likes better*, to be one of these *appendages*, or such a *hurting* a person in his goods, as is an act of OPPRESSION. And I must tell you moreover, that tho' all professions of moderation, and of a zeal for liberty, are very good, and ought to be *encouraged*; yet they must appear to come but *awkwardly* from your pen, till you have renounced the doctrine of MAHOMET†, with respect to the levying a *fine*, *proportioned as it ought to be*, on every one that dissents from the established religion, as a *composition*----TRIBUTE* for his liberty.

Obj. 3. Good men may (my words are, “all
“but those, who believe as the church believes
“will) be branded with marks of infamy‡.”

* These are recommended by Dr. Stebbing, in his Polemical Tracts.

† Compare Dr. Stebbing's Polemical Tracts, Essay concerning Civil Government, p. 84, 85, 93. with the *Alckoran*, translated by Mr. Sale, chap. ix. p. 152.

‡ Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 56.

Here your answer is not *directly* to the objection, but what there is of it is extremely abrupt and spirited.---*So they may; and if they be good men, they will know how to bear it. Bad ones deserve disgrace, and it may help to mend their manners**. But because good men *will know how to bear it*, does it follow, that they may be *righteously* branded with marks of infamy? Or is this any vindication of a rule, by which they are *unavoidably* subjected to brands of infamy? An *inquisitor* may in the same dogmatical strain defend the *rack*.---*Good men will know how to bear it; bad ones deserve punishment, and it may help to mend their manners.* And instead of adding, *Note that man* ---*that he may be ashamed* (which text, though you have brought it more than once into this controversy, as a warrant for rejecting all as heretics who depart from the faith, relates only to a case of *immorality*) instead of adding this, he need but subjoin, to render his argument altogether as good, and, I think, as *specious* as yours, the following passage: *Deliver such a one unto Satan, for the destruction of the flesh,---that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

To my fourth and fifth objections you have said nothing, except it be to the last clause --- “ That
“ the faith and consciences of christians will be sub-
“ jected to an ecclesiastical tyranny and inquisi-
“ tion.” And here your answer is (what a man may easily give to any bad consequences urged against an opinion, when he sees himself likely to be *embarraſs’d* by them) *Hard words and nothing else*.---

* Dr. Stebbing’s Letter, p. 79.

I shall not presume, Sir, to reply to such peremptory and decisive arguments as these; but shall submit it to the reader, whether if this be a *just* consequence from your account of heresy (and I think it a most *certain* and *indisputable* one) it be not a TERRIBLE THING too (harder than *Egyptian* or *Turkish* slavery) against which the christian *laity* have the highest reason to be upon their guard.

You may, if you please, continue to say, that in all this I am *objecting not against you, but against the gospel*. Others, before you, have fathered upon the gospel notions that are both absurd and unscriptural. And therefore I shall give myself no concern about such *stale* and *worn-out* devices as these, but leave them to the public censure.

The last objection that I made against your notion of heresy is this, That heresy, *i. e.* The heresy condemned in the New Testament, and for which persons are to be rejected from the society and fellowship of christians, is, according to St. Paul, a *work of the flesh*, which he that does *shall not inherit the kingdom of God* *. To this you reply, That *every* character is not a definition. It is one thing to say what heretics are, another to say what they must be. If heresy is a *work of the flesh*, so is idolatry. But is a carnal mind *essential to the notion of an idolater* †, &c. As this whole passage is very curious and extraordinary, I shall consider it distinctly and fully. And,

First, it is a great satisfaction to me to observe, that you are not so much opposing *me*, as directly

* Gal. v. 20, 21.

† Second Letter, p. 73.

contradicting St. *Paul*, who expressly says, that HERESY is *a work of the flesh*: Whereas you insinuate, that this is not an account of what *heresy* is, but of what *heretics* were. Another person, after your laudable example, may be tempted to take the same liberty with respect to *adultery*, and say, *every* character is not a definition; it is one thing to say what adulterers are, another to say what they must be: For *heresy*, in the text itself, is affirmed to be a work of the flesh, for any thing that appears to the contrary, in the same sense that *adultery* is; and the Apostle has made no manner of difference between them. If he had intended, ever so much, to represent the matter according to my notion of it, he could not possibly have used stronger terms; which, if he wrote with a design to be understood, is next to a demonstration that this was his *real sense*, and, of consequence, that your account of heresy is false and unscriptural. But,

Secondly, you must allow me to inform the reader, that you have either mistaken, or artfully changed, the *subject* of the proposition, which is HERESY; and not, as your answer requires to make it any thing plausible, HERETICS. Had the apostle expressed himself thus, HERETICS *walk after the flesh*, it might perhaps have looked somewhat *specious* to persons of little reflection to say, *every* character is not a definition; and that this was only a description of what heretics were, and not of what they must be. But when it is affirmed, that *heresy* absolutely, *i. e.* the offence it self, is a *work of the flesh*; there is no room for such an evasion: And to endeavour to obtrude
this

this upon any as an HISTORICAL passage only, and not a description of the nature and quality of *the crime itself*, is a gross affront to his understanding. However,

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to shew from the context, that what you insinuate cannot be St. Paul's meaning. In the 16th and 17th verses, he mentions two principles, the *spirit*, and the *flesh*; the one as the principle of *piety* and *goodness*, the other of *irreligion* and *immorality*. He then proceeds first to give a *catalogue* of the *works of the flesh*, or works that spring from the *evil* principle, which is repugnant to virtue and true religion. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are, adultery, fornication — idolatry — heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelling and such like.* — But of such things as *may not be*, and sometimes *are not*, works of the flesh, the Apostle could not surely say *absolutely* — *The works of the flesh are manifest, which are so and so, specifying* these very things particularly, and including them among other things that are *necessarily* and *at all times* works of the flesh, without any mark of *distinction*, or intimating the least *exception*; because this is writing with great *impropriety* at least. He goes on to inform the *Galatians* what is *the fruit of the spirit*, and tells them, that it is *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, &c.* Now what would be thought of the man that should say with respect to these, *every character is not a definition*: 'Tis one thing to say what the *charitable* and *peaceable* were, another to say what they must be. Do you believe in your own conscience, Sir, that he would not be justly regarded

as

as a very trifling and evasive writer? And yet this strange licence is allowable in *both* the instances, or in *neither*. But in truth, as I hinted before, here is nothing at all said of MEN, but only of VIRTUES and VICES considered in themselves; the latter of which are represented ABSOLUTELY as *works of the flesh*, and the former as *the fruit of the spirit*.

Fourthly, whereas you are pleas'd to ask me, whether *a carnal mind be essential to the notion of an idolater*? I answer; That 'tis one thing, *what principles an idolater may*, in fact, *be influenced by*, and another, *what idolatry is in itself*: And it is the *last* of these only that St. Paul is speaking of. Idolatry, you yourself must allow, is a heinous offence against *the law of nature*, and of consequence, being a scandalous *immorality*, and directly *contrary* to what the apostle has affirm'd to be the principle of religion and virtue, it is justly mention'd as, *in itself*, one of the *works of the flesh*. And do but allow, what I think you cannot deny without being a direct *oppugner* of the doctrine of an inspired apostle, that heresy likewise is *absolutely*, and *in itself*, a *work of the flesh*, and you will effectually overturn your whole scheme. I shall apply it to *this use* immediately—But, in the mean time, must take some notice of what you seem to think the main strength of your Answer, and have given in the following words. *Go on, if you please, and say, as you do* (i. e. with St. Paul) *that heretics* (i. e. they who *do*, or are guilty of, heresy) *shall not inherit the kingdom of God. You will get nothing more. For neither shall idolaters; neither*

*neither shall unbelievers: For he that believeth not shall be damn'd. But will you allow of no exceptions to general rules? Will you say, that every idolater, and every unbeliever, is wilfully so, and consequently in a state of damnation**. Here, Sir, I must acknowledge myself to be at a loss in what manner to apprehend you. If you intended only to draw me into a *snare*, and do not *yourself* believe, that some idolaters and unbelievers may be saved, you have offer'd that as an answer, which, however your adversary may happen to be embarrassed by it, can, in your own judgment, be *no real answer* to the difficulty; which is a method of arguing, that has more of artifice, than of fairness and ingenuity in it. But if you designed to intimate it as your *real* opinion, that every idolater, and every unbeliever, is not absolutely in a state of damnation; you might surely have spared this sentence, that when *I have said* they are, *I shall meet with answerers enough* (perhaps) *among my FRIENDS*. For why, I ask you, among *my* friends? Will not such answerers be more properly ranked among *your* friends, since it is with *you* (upon the supposition now made) that they agree in sentiment, than among *mine*, whose opinion they must directly oppose? Your expressing yourself thus, Sir, makes me doubt whether you are really in earnest; or only looking out for a *shift*. Or, if you designed to insinuate, that *idolaters* or *unbelievers* are (perhaps) my friends; besides that you have put a case, of my pronouncing the absolute damnation of *my*

* Second Letter, p. 73.

friends,

friends, which contradicts and destroys itself, it is a most *mean* and *unchristian* reflection, that deserves nothing but pity and contempt. But be your views and intentions what they will, I shall endeavour to set this matter, according to my apprehension of it, in a clear and just light.—By the *flesh*, as it stands here in opposition to the *spirit*, St. Paul evidently means the principle and source of *moral evil*: When he speaks of the *lusts of the flesh*, he means inordinate affections and evil habits, affections and habits *in their own nature* evil and irregular: And by the *works of the flesh*, evil deeds, and *immoral* practices, practices that are *in themselves* evil. When therefore he says, that *they who do these evil works shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, he must be allowed to intend *something* by the expression, and something *certain* and *determinate* too; or else, his meaning, with respect to the very terms of salvation themselves, is impossible to be fixed. And what can this *something* be, if we reduce it to the lowest and softest sense that the words will admit of, but this; that *they who do the works of the flesh*, either *adultery* which is a work of the flesh, or *idolatry*, or *murders*, or *heresies* (which are all *indiscriminately*, and, in the same *stile*, affirmed to be *works of the flesh*) shall not, according to the *general rule* of God's moral government, and the *declared constitution* of the gospel, *inherit the kingdom of God*. What allowances the merciful judge of the world may make for the unhappy circumstances and almost invincible prejudices of *some* idolaters, and unbelievers, is nothing at all to the purpose: For if the circumstances

cumstances of *other* offenders are equally unhappy, and their prejudices as invincible, there must, in strict *equity*, be the same allowances made for them, as in the case of *idolatry*. But what conclusion shall we draw from hence? Will this *extenuate* the guilt of these crimes, consider'd in themselves? Or will it prove that the *general* and *declared* constitution of the gospel is not as I have stated it, that *they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*? What inference then will it yield, that can be of any advantage to you in this controversy? Can it be of service to you *to say only*, that there may be some *exceptions* from this general rule? Not in the least: For should this be allowed, yet if (as has been proved) heresy absolutely, and itself, be a *work of the flesh*; and if *they who do this work*, according to the general constitution of the gospel *declared* by St. Paul, shall *not inherit the kingdom of God*; it must then follow, if your notion of heresy be true, that departing from the faith, even when it is a mere *involuntary* error, and consistent with *sincerity*, is *in itself* a *work of the flesh*; which according to the general constitution of the gospel *declared* by St. Paul, will exclude from salvation. And, of course, it must follow, that *mere human frailty*, though it be joined with most pious and upright intentions, is justly ranked, without any *distinction*, or the least *alleviating* circumstance, with *adultery, murder, idolatry*, and other *capital* offences against the law of nature, as what, in an *ordinary* way, puts men *equally* with any of these, in a state of *damnation*.

Let me add, that whatever offenders may, in some *special* cases, be supposed to be *excepted* from the apostle's general rule, the *heretic* can be no exception; nor hope to be saved, as you would have it thought idolaters and unbelievers may, even by the *uncovenanted* mercies of God; if the description elsewhere given of him, by the same writer, be interpreted in its most *natural* and *obvious* meaning, *viz.* that he *sinneth*, and is *condemned of himself*, or, in other words, sins directly against the *conviction of his own mind*. My sentiment, I beg the reader to observe, agrees strictly with the account given of heresy in *both* these passages—Yours, on the contrary, renders it *jejune*, and *self-contradictory*. I now proceed to defend what I have advanced, as the *true* and *scriptural* notion of heresy.

There are only two branches of the heretic's character, as it is described by St. Paul, about which there hath, hitherto, been a controversy between us; *viz.* he *sinneth*, and is *condemned of himself*.

1. He *sinneth*. And what have I endeavoured to prove from hence? Why, if your account may be trusted, I have argued *merely* from the word *sinneth*, that by a *heretic* St. Paul means him only who maintains wrong opinions, knowing them to be such. And upon this you observe, that to draw any argument from hence to my purpose it will be necessary to say, that no man *sinneth*, but he who acts directly against conviction*. What you allege, as the foundation of this false

* Second Letter, p. 21.

charge, is contained in the following words.

“ According to St. *Paul's* account, a heretic—

“ *sinneth*, i. e. maintains wrong sentiments of

“ christianity *wilfully*, and with an *ill* intention—

“ The persons, described by the apostle as *sinners*,

“ must be *wilful* corrupters and opposers of the

“ christian religion.” But to your *perversion* of

my true meaning, I have already given a distinct

and *full* answer. And I must desire the reader to

be at the pains of consulting the passage at large *;

because it will not only clear the point from the

confusion in which you have involved it, but may

serve as a warning and *direction* to him for the

future—by enabling him, from your conduct,

to judge of your *views* and *design* in writing.

From the passage here referred to, it must evi-

dently appear; First, That I endeavoured, as I

have directly told you, to establish my notion

of a heretic by *degrees* as the text in the epistle to

Titus suggested it; and not to deduce the *whole*

of his character from every *single* branch of his

character. Secondly, That I supposed there may

be several *degrees* of *wilful* error, and that it does

not consist in an *absolute point* ---- the acting di-

rectly against conviction. And thirdly, That by

wilful error, I meant no more than *voluntary* er-

ror: Which 'it is very surprizing you yourself

should not *know* from another paragraph in my

first *Letter* †, where the word occurs, and can be

taken in no other sense.

Let me add, That I can see no reason, why

the words *voluntary* and *wilful* may not be used

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 23, 24, 25.

† Page 63.

promiscuously, as well as the words *legal* and *lawful*. But if a man's *embracing* errors, or doctrines contrary to christianity, may be *voluntary*, or which is the same according to my notion of the term, *wilful*; his *maintaining* them, may, and must, be so likewise: Since they both result *originally* from the *same* cause; *i. e.* not from a mere error of the *understanding*, or mere human frailty, but from some fault of the *will*. It is therefore no absurdity at all to say, "that he who
 " is *convinced* in his own mind, maintains that
 " whereof he is convinced *wilfully**;" *i. e.* *voluntarily*, or from some fault of the *will*.—Nor am I *singular* in the language I have used; but have on my side very distinguished authors of the first character for judgment and great abilities. It will, I presume, be thought sufficient, if I name only Archbishop *Tillotson*, who speaks thus:
 " An error which proceeds from want of ordinary human care, and due government of a
 " man's self, is in a great degree *WILFUL*." Of these he enumerates particular instances, not *one* of which supposes the erroneous person to act *directly* against conviction: "As when it proceeds
 " from an unreasonable and obstinate prejudice,
 " from great pride and self-conceit, and contempt of counsel and instruction; or from a visible bias of self-interest, &c." And a little after this, he adds another passage, under the same head of discourse, which shews, that by *wilful* and *voluntary* he meant the same thing, and used them as *synonymous* terms: "So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they em-

* Dr. Stebbing's Second Letter, p. 23.

“ brace in order to practice, and not to suffer
 “ themselves to be hurried away by an unrea-
 “ sonable prejudice, and a heady passion, with-
 “ out a due and calm examination of things;
 “ not to be overborn by pride, or humour, or
 “ partiality, or interest, &c. because proportionably
 “ to the VOLUNTARINESS of our error,” [which
 he had stiled before, for the very same reasons,
 an error that is WILFUL in a great degree] “ will
 “ be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that
 “ error *.”

But you will still ask, May a man maintain
 doctrines contrary to christianity with an *ill in-
 tention* † likewise, and yet not *know* them to be
 such? Undoubtedly he may. He may maintain,
 Sir (as all the world besides yourself will allow)
 doctrines that are *agreeable* to christianity, and
 which he firmly *believes* to be *true*, with an *ill*
intention; *i. e.* either to gratify his ambition and
 vanity, or from a view to private interest. What
 then should hinder, but that he may maintain
wrong sentiments with an *ill* intention, though he
 does not *know* them to be *wrong*? — He that
 espouses *right* principles with an *ill* intention *while*
 he believes them to be right, may, surely, *espouse*
wrong principles likewise with an *ill* intention,
notwithstanding he believes them to be right: And
 'tis your imagination only that has raised this
 frightful bugbear, with which you seem to be so
 much *confounded*.

The dispute between us is at length brought
 to this; What may be justly inferred from that

* Tillotson's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 355, 356.

† See Dr Stebbing's Second Letter, p. 23.

part of St. Paul's description of a heretic ---- He *finneth*? I declared it as my opinion, that the Apostle must mean, that the heretic's "error is
 "voluntary, and springs either from *corrupt principles*, or an *ill intention*, because sin, in the
 "very nature of it implies some fault in the *will*;
 "and errors of the understanding, *considered in*
 "themselves, are not criminal *." To which you answer, That the Greek words ἁμαρτία and ἁμαρτάνειν carry with them no such determinate meaning, ---- but oftentimes signify no more than a simple error or transgression; according to which notion men are said to sin, or be sinners, only with respect to the act materially considered: Thus John viii. 46. τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέσχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας; which of you convinceth me of SIN? By which our Saviour did not mean to ask, whether any of them could convince him of wilful transgression, but (simply) of transgression. So Acts xxv. 8. St. Paul says, neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, neither against Cæsar, τί ἡμαρτον, have I (not wilfully offended, but simply) offended. But most remarkable to our purpose is, 1 Tim. i. 15. where St. Paul calls himself the CHIEF of sinners, because he had aforesometimes been a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy (says he) because I did it ignorantly. And in his defence before the Jewish council he says, he had lived in all good conscience before God, Acts xxiii. 1. A sinner nevertheless he might be (and no doubt he was) in your sense of finning; but the chief of sinners he could not be any otherwise than with re-

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 68.

spect to the act materially considered. More Instances might be produced; but these are sufficient to shew, that when the Apostle says of a heretic, that he sinneth, he might mean the same thing as if he had said, he is gone out of the way.*

Before I consider this matter distinctly, I would just observe, That when Christ says, *which of you convinceth me of SIN*; he probably means, which of you convinceth me of *deceit and imposture*, in *pretending* to be a prophet sent from God, and the true *Messiah*, when I *really* am not so. To this sense the context plainly leads us, which stands thus: † *And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of SIN*; i. e. (as the connection requires it should be explained) of *not telling you the truth*; of *falsely assuming the prophetic character*? And if you are not able to do this, if you cannot prove me to be an impostor, if, on the contrary, *I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?* This, I think, is the most natural paraphrase that can be given of the text. And I submit it to the judicious reader, whether our Saviour could suppose himself to be thus *convicted*, and proved to be such a *false deceiver*, without thinking that he must be a WILFUL sinner; or whether any of the *Jews* could understand him thus. A *deluded enthusiast* he could not be, because such a long pretence of miracles could not be supported by mere *enthusiasm*. He must have known, in several cases at least, that the miracles he *pretended* to were not really

* Second Letter, p. 71.

† John viii. 45, 46.

performed: Nor was it possible, that the people should have been so grossly imposed upon for a considerable time, without some WILFUL and concerted *fraud*---In like manner, if St. Paul had such an *exact knowledge* of the law of the *Jews*, and of the respect due to the temple, and to *Cæsar*, as to be able to say, That *he had not offended against them* ($\tau\iota$) in *any one* instance, or *any thing at all*; 'tis scarce possible he should have offended without being a *voluntary* offender, or that he could imagine this of himself. In both these passages, therefore, the offence, and transgression spoken of, plainly includes in it the idea of VOLUNTARY transgression.

But to shew that the whole of what you have observed is very little to the purpose, I offer the following remarks.---First, If the meaning of these words a heretic *sinne**th* be no more than this, He is *gone out of the way*, the Apostle hath asserted nothing here but what he had expressed as fully before, and you make him write after this manner: A heretic $\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\pi\lambda\alpha\iota$ is *subverted*, i. e. is *gone out of the way*, and *sinne**th*, i. e. again the *same*, is *gone out of the way*. Whereas if we suppose St. Paul to say first in general, that he is perverted, and then that he errs, and is gone out of the way, *voluntarily*, there is a propriety in *both* the expressions.---The whole question then is in short this, whether we shall admit an interpretation in which the sense is *distinct*, and *rises*; or one, in which a different *word* conveys no *idea* that is at all different, but is a flat and insipid *tautology*.---If the *tautological* interpretation were the *only one* that the word is capable of, we must of course

course have acquiesced in it; but when there is another that avoids this *difficulty*, and is withal more natural and significant, *common sense* will direct us which to chuse. Secondly, When St. Paul speaks of a heretic as one that *sinneth*, I took it for granted, that he used the word in its most *obvious* and *usual* sense, and spoke of sin for which the heretic is ACCOUNTABLE. And I believe there is not *one* person in the world would understand him otherwise, if he was not biaised in favour of some *hypothesis*. But this, which is the *general* and most *natural* acceptation of the term, will by no means suit *your* notion of heresy; and cannot be the case in *the reason of the thing*, unless his offence be VOLUNTARY.---It follows therefore, Thirdly, That in all those passages which you have produced to shew, that men are said to be *sinners* only with respect to the act *materially* considered, it follows, I say, that if it be an act for which the sinner is ACCOUNTABLE, it must necessarily include in it the idea of VOLUNTARY transgression. And the reason why men are described as *sinners*, in all such passages, is evidently this, that when any action is either *directly* repugnant to the law of nature, or a *plain* violation of a positive law, it is always *presumed*, that the persons offending either *had*, or *might have had*, a knowledge of the law, and consequently that they sinned from some fault of their WILLS.---I may proceed one step farther, and add, Fourthly, That in none of the instances which you have alleged, could a man be said to be a *sinner* with respect to the act *materially* considered, but upon this supposition *only*, that he was a VOLUNTARY agent.

agent. Neither St. *Paul*, I presume, nor any other moral writer, would have represented an *idiot* or a *madman* *, who was a *blasphemer* and *injurious*, as a *sinner*, purely on account of the *material* acts. And what reason can be assigned for this, but that these acts, in *such* persons, are entirely INVOLUNTARY, and that any *beast of prey*, that *burts* an innocent traveller, may be stiled a *sinner* with equal propriety? But he justly calls himself a *sinner*, because, as you allow, there is no doubt but he *was* so in my sense of *sinning*; i. e. a VOLUNTARY transgressor. And, farther, he speaks of himself as *the chief of sinners* only for this reason, because the blasphemy, injustice, and persecutions which he committed, and which are justly ranked amongst the blackest of crimes, were all VOLUNTARY actions. But he could not properly have said so much as that he was a *sinner*, and much less that he was *the chief of sinners*, if he had either been *invincibly* ignorant of the malignity and guilt of these crimes, or his WILL had no concern in the commission of them.

To proceed: Another thing that I observed was this, “ That the crime of the heretic, whom St. *Paul* speaks of, was of such a nature, as required “ not *instruction*, but *admonition*; from whence, I “ apprehended, it evidently follows, that the fault “ lay in the *will*, and in the *understanding* †.” And the argument, thus rightly stated, I am ready to defend, because I still think it to be very strong and conclusive. The answer you gave to it in your first Letter ‡ was, *That as St. Paul was now giving*

* N. B. I suppose the misfortune of these persons to be *natural* and *unavoidable*.

† Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 26.

‡ Page 15.
direc-

directions to a Bishop, it was natural for him to mention such particulars only, as specially concerned the office of a Bishop, such, you say, were admonition and rejection: For as to instruction, That lay in common among all the pastors of the church. To which I replied, That "the design of my argument was to shew, that to admonish for mere errors of the understanding is absurd in itself."---And if so, "will the character of the admonisher make it wise and rational? If it be absurd in a presbyter, in all mankind, in the very nature of the thing, must it not also be absurd in a Bishop?" Upon this you say, I stand corrected, Sir †---and add something to excuse your having given such a remote and trifling answer; which if the reader understands, and judges it to be a sufficient excuse, I am very well contented to let it pass, as having now no concern in it; because you have given up the answer itself.*

It only remains to be considered, what you have replied to the argument, as it stands at present. And really, Sir, you must allow me to say, that you have barrangued upon it so loosely, that I find it extremely difficult to reduce what you have offered to any general heads: However, I shall do it in the best manner I can. You tell me, that I have set forth all heretics as complete knaves---whom you think much fitter for the Gallows, than to be dealt with in any reasonable way ‡. This I mention not as bearing of the least similitude of argument; but to shew how forward you

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 26.

† Second Letter, p. 25.

‡ Ibid. p. 26.

are, on all occasions, to express your zeal for *wholesome severities*. The GALLOWS is the proper discipline for all who are in the highest class of the wilfully erroneous, who make religion a cloak for their immoralities, and have resolved to sacrifice truth and virtue to the gratification of their sensual desires. And for the simply, the sincerely, erroneous, for such as dissent, even from a principle of conscience, from the established religion, you have provided PECUNIARY MULCTS, after the laudable example of MAHOMET; and have taken due care, by leaving the sum to the discretion * of the magistrate, that they may exceed, if occasion requires, any Mahometan taxations merely on account of religion.----Are these, Sir, your principles of liberty? Is this your tender christian spirit?---But not to insist farther on this: You tell me, *That instruction* supposed, *admonition* may always properly follow †. By which you should mean, to make this remark at all pertinent, instruction *after* the person is become erroneous, and has departed from the faith: For otherwise, the erroneous person, considered as such, will have no instruction at all, but only be admonished; which, in cases of mere involuntary error, I have shewn to be absurd. And yet this, which is the only thing that could be to your purpose, seems, from the following passage, not to have been your real meaning. *Those*, you say, *whom the standing instructions of the church could not preserve from corruptions in the faith*, might

* Six-pence in the pound, OR ANY OTHER SUM you like better. Dr. Stebbing's Polemical Tracts.

† Second Letter, p. 25.

be reformed by admonitions *. Here you plainly intimate, that by the *instruction supposed*, you intended nothing more than the *standing instructions* of the church: And that when any err from the faith, who have had the advantage of these standing instructions, be they ever so *sincere*, and their error ever so *involuntary*, there is no farther INSTRUCTION required; and nothing to be done but for the Bishop, *forthwith*, to proceed to ADMONITION. But this, you may easily see, is only asserting your own *opinion*, and no answer at all to my argument, that in cases of mere *involuntary* error *openly* espoused (which in your notion is heresy) *admonition* is frivolous and impertinent; and that *instruction* is the only *fit* means to recover those from their mistakes, who err *sincerely*, and think it their *duty* to propagate their errors.

And whereas you say, That *there is such a thing, surely, as rebuking in the spirit of meekness; by which no one understands merely telling men that they are in the wrong, but applying to offenders in a way proper to reform them; and ask, Who is so much a stranger to common life as not to know, that the admonitions of wise and grave men are apt to work upon most tempers; to awaken the careless, as well as to curb the self-willed and perverse* †? All this has very little relation to the point we are inquiring about, which is solely this, which is the *proper* way of rectifying a mistaken judgment, *instruction*, or *admonition*. I say, in concurrence with the *reason* and *experience* of all mankind, *instruction*; and that if St. Paul had imagined, that the espousing mere

* Second Letter, p. 27.

† Ibid. p. 26.

involuntary error was the just idea of heresy, he would, as a *wise* man that understood human nature, and much more as an *inspired* Apostle, have prescribed *instruction*, and not *admonition*; and for this reason likewise, that *church-censures*, after admonition only, must have a direct tendency (in all such cases) to create a disgust both against the church, and the doctrines she maintains; and, consequently, to strengthen *prejudice*, and render error more *incurable*, instead of *enlightening* and *correcting* the judgment. Nay, I think it a thing not to be supposed, that the Apostle would have order'd those, who err *involuntarily*, and are *sincere* in their mistakes, to be rejected even after the *first* and *second* INSTRUCTION: For why should the instructions be limited to so *small* a number? Why should an honest man, after *one* or *two* tryals be given up, and abandon'd as irreclaimable? The gentle and compassionate spirit of the gospel must certainly require, that greater *tendernefs* should be shewn to a person of this character, before he is solemnly separated from the *society* and *fellowship* of Christians; since, after many repeated experiments, his mistakes may at length be happily rectify'd only by setting the truth in a *particular* light, that is adapted to his understanding and peculiar train of thinking. But that St. Paul in cases of *sincere involuntary* error, where instruction *alone* is wanted, should either direct Titus (not to *instruct* but) to admonish; or to reject, after the first and second *admonition*; is utterly inconceivable. And therefore the natural consequence from the whole is this---That the fault of the heretic,

heretic, which required *admonition*, lay in the *will*, and not in the *understanding*.

I come now to the last branch of the heretic's character, as it is described by St. Paul, he is ἀυλοκατάκριτος, *self-condemned*: Which I have interpreted thus, that he really, in his own mind, *condemns* and *passeth sentence* against, himself. And I offered a general argument, from the derivation and construction of the word itself, to shew, that this is, at least, its most *natural* and *probable* sense; which, as you have entirely passed it by, and doubtless had your *reasons* for it, I presume once more to recommend to the reader's consideration. The passage you may remember is this. "You allow, Sir, when you call other
 " senses of the word *indirect* or *more remote*,
 " that κατὰ κρίνεν properly signifies to *condemn* or
 " *pass sentence against a person*, as a judge doth.
 " And hence it follows, that κατὰ κρίνεται denotes
 " *a condemned person*, one *against whom sentence*
 " *hath been given*. Which word, though it be
 " not found in the New Testament, yet the
 " sense of is evident from its opposite ἀκατάκριτος
 " *uncondemned*, which we meet with, *Acts*
 " *xvi. 37. They have beaten us openly uncondemned,*
 " *ἀκατάκριτους*. These persons had been "AC-
 " CUSED before the magistrates, and WITNES-
 " SES enough appeared against them, as is plain
 " from *ver. 19--22.* but as they had not been
 " heard in their own defence, nor any legal *sen-*
 " *tence was passed upon them*, they are stiled
 " ἀκατάκριτοι. Now when αὐτός is joined with
 " any other word, which thus compounded de-
 " notes an action, it always intimates that the
 " person,

“ person, of whom that word is spoken, does
 “ *himself* perform the action expressed by it.
 “ Thus ἀποδιδάσκει is one who instructs him-
 “ self, ἀποκινῆσει one who moves himself, ἀπο-
 “ θάναται one who kills himself; and so ἀποκα-
 “ λᾶν εἰς must signify *one condemned of himself*,
 “ *or who passeth sentence against himself* *.”

From hence it plainly appears, that you had
 no refuge to fly to but some *improper* and *remote*
 sense of the word καλᾶν εἰς. And therefore
 you have observ'd, that those are frequently said
 καλᾶν εἰς, not only who do themselves, as Judges,
 determine or pass sentence of condemnation upon
 any man, but those also who do indirectly, or more
 remotely, condemn a man, by being in some respect
 or other the instrument, in virtue whereof con-
 demnation is pronounced; i. e. (as you explain it
 afterwards) by appearing as witnesses against him.
 And thus ἀποκαλᾶν εἰς may signify only SELF-
 ACCUSED, or one that is a witness against him-
 self. To support this observation, you produced
 several texts of scripture: These I have consid-
 ered, in order to shew that they were not to
 your purpose; and shall now endeavour to defend
 my remarks, against the objections which you
 have made to them.

The first passage is *Heb. xi. 7.* where it said of
 Noah, that (καλᾶν εἰς) he *condemned the world*.
 And to shew that you have taken an unwarrant-
 able licence, and that there could be no reason
 for departing from the *original* and *proper* sense
 of καλᾶν εἰς, I give the following interpretation

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 30.

of the words: That *Noah's* " building an ark,
 " as a proof of his own belief of the warnings he
 " gave those people of the approaching deluge,
 " was a *virtual condemnation* of their impiety in
 " not hearkening to him, and a pronouncing
 " their punishment to be just. &c.*" You object
 to this account as imperfect, and bid me *mind the*
opposition. Noah saved himself, and condemned
 the world. From what did he save himself? Why
 from the judgment of God: He subjected the world
 therefore to the judgment of God; and this he did
 by leaving them without excuse, in the same sense
 in which our Saviour says he did ἐλέγχειν τὸν
 κόσμον, CONVINCING the world of sin; John xvi.
 8.† To which it will be sufficient to answer,
 That the opposition is altogether as clear in *my*
 sense of the words as in *this*; though I thought
 it enough to explain only the latter part of them,
 in order to fix the meaning of the word καλέσθαι.
 But the whole may stand thus: *Noah*, by build-
 ing an ark in consequence of his faith, that God
 would, as he had threatened, destroy the old
 world, both saved his own house from *that* judg-
 ment, and *virtually condemned* all those who fell
 under it, as righteously punished for their unbel-
 lief. This sense, I think, is *natural*, the oppo-
 sition *clear*, and no *force* is put (as there is in
 your interpretation) upon the word καλέσθαι.
Erasmus's note, which you subjoin here, is very
 consistent with this sense, and both are true: *Noah's*
 building the ark had doubtless *that effect*, as to
 cut off all excuse; but that is not the meaning of

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 31.

† Second Letter, p. 32.

the word *καλέσθαι*, and, therefore, not what the author *directly* says. And with respect to our Saviour's words, *John* xvi. 8. it appears to me, Sir, that you have scarce given yourself the trouble to look into them: For you have quoted the passage itself *wrong*. He says not, that *he himself did*, but that, when the Holy Ghost came, he should *convince the world of sin*. However, rightly or falsely quoted, they are quite impertinent; because, First, The meaning of the word *ἐλέσθαι* can never help us to settle the sense of a quite *different* word, *κατακαίειν*. And, Secondly, You seem to have mistaken the true sense even of the word *ἐλέσθαι*, when it is said of the Holy Ghost, that he should *convince* the world of sin. For it does not appear, that our Saviour intended by this expression, that he would *leave the world without excuse*; but only to denote *the effect*, which his miraculous gifts and powers, hereafter to be conferred, would have upon their *minds*. The world was to be convinced of *sin*, in the same manner as it was to be convinced of *righteousness*. By *righteousness* we are to understand the integrity of Christ's conduct, the justice of his pretensions, the divine truth and rectitude of his religion. But of this, surely, the world were not to be *convinced* by *leaving them without excuse*. No; The last and most extraordinary effusion of the spirit, of which this text speaks, was to *convince* the world, *i. e.* *make them sensible*, that Christ was a righteous person, and had maintained a righteous cause; by giving them *clear evidence* that he was ascended to the father. In like manner they were to be *convinced*,

vinced, i. e. *made sensible*, of the greatness and heinousness of their *sin* in disbelieving and rejecting him. This was the *direct* design and tendency of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost communicated after our Saviour's ascension; and the leaving the world without excuse was only a *remote* and *accidental* effect. But as 'tis highly probable, for the reason already intimated, that you never examined the text you have quoted, 'tis no wonder that you have *misrepresented* the sense of it. All your objections against the interpretation which I have given of *Hebrews xi. 7.* being, I think, fully removed, I proceed to the next passage.

Matthew xi. 41. Luke xi. 32. The men of Niniveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation (καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτήν) and shall condemn it. I had said, this text may be interpreted as in the instance of *Noah*: "They shall pronounce your condemnation to be just; or thus, They shall be your judges, and will condemn you *." But you ask, *How is it possible, that it should be thus interpreted? Who is to pass sentence, or, to pronounce condemnation, but the judge? Or, who is judge at the last day but God? And add: The Ninevites therefore could condemn that generation of men no otherwise than as witnesses †.* But allow me, Sir, in my turn to ask a few questions likewise. Of *what* were these *Ninevites* to be witnesses? Of the conduct of persons *not in being*, till many ages after they themselves were *dead*? This, sure, will not be pretended. Of

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 33.

† Second Letter, p. 33.

their own conduct? This seems *extrajudicial*; and might rather be expected from *others*, than from *themselves*. How then can they be considered as WITNESSES? If you say, that they will not *really* and *directly* stand forth as witnesses, but may be said to be witnesses *virtually*, as their *conduct* will strongly *testify* against all those, who continue impenitent under much greater advantages: It must be evident to every one, that for the same reason they may as well be said *virtually* to judge, pass sentence, or pronounce condemnation. And thus the passage will be *naturally* explained; and (which it *cannot* be, if your interpretation be admitted) without straining and torturing the word *καταχεινέειν*. And I thought I had sufficiently guarded against such kind of objections, as you are here pleased to make, by saying, That the expression in this passage might be interpreted as in the instance of *Noah* (preserving the ALLUSION to the *original* and *proper* signification of *καταχεινέειν*.) For by the explication in the *parenthesis*, which you have thought proper to *omit*, it is plain I could not intend to represent the *Ninevites* as *proper* judges; but only as *assenting to* and *approving* (which their repenting at the preaching of *Jonas* was a demonstration that they *must* do) the sentence of the supreme judge. The authorities in your margin from *Grotius*, out of *Cicero* and *Tacitus*, concerning the use of the *Latin* word *condemnare*, are liable to two exceptions. First, That although in some other language the same word, which like *καταχεινέειν* in *Greek*, in its proper sense signifies to *condemn*, may by a *metonymy* be sometimes

times used in the sense of *accusing*, or *bearing witness*; yet there is no reasoning in such cases from one language to another. Besides, Secondly, The authorities you mention are not to your purpose in *this* place: For they only shew, that *condemnare* in a few instances is put for *accusare*. But you consider the *Ninevites* not as *accusers* in pleading, but as *witnesses* only, which are two very different ideas. As to the other passage in *Matthew* xii. 27. and *Luke* xi. 19. which I brought to illustrate that which speaks of the *Ninevites*, I have never said that it refers to the *future judgment*. Nothing more may be intended by it than that *they shall*, or *let them*, judge, by what they know of their own conduct, how unrighteously you censure me and my actions. I see nothing of the notion of a *witness* here, unless all who pass sentence on another's conduct must be said to be witnesses; and so every judge will be a *witness for*, or *against*, those, whom he clears or condemns by his sentence.

With regard to *Rom.* ii. 1. *Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self*, I said, "The whole *process* is in the offender's own breast; 'tis there he *judgeth another*, and *passeth sentence upon himself*; so that he is properly *αὐτοκατάκριτος*, * " To this you answer: *You say he passeth sentence upon himself. What, actually and directly upon himself? I deny it. A sentence passed upon B is not a sentence passed upon A* †. Surely, a writer must be reduced to most wretched shifts, who can prevail with himself to

* Letter to Dr. Stebbing, p. 34.

† Second Letter, p. 35.

return such an answer. Could it be supposed my meaning was, that while A *actually* and *directly* passeth sentence upon B, he condemns himself by those *express terms* by which he condemns B? No man of common understanding, and void of prejudice, would think this to be my meaning. But still I say, That if A is conscious to himself, that he is guilty of the like crimes with B, while he condemns B, he must necessarily also condemn himself, tho' not in the same *express form*, and so become *αὐτοκατάκριτος*. Nor is there any *possible* room to consider him only as a *witness* with regard to the one, and a *judge* as to the other; since he is represented as a *judge* in the text, and must, in the reason of the thing, act as a *judge*, equally to both.

The last text is *Luke xix. 22. Out of thine own mouth will I judge, or condemn, thee, κρινῶ σε*. Here you tell me I mistook your purpose, which was only to shew, *that the notion or character of a self-condemned man is here preserved, where the person only stood as a witness against himself* *. But how does it appear, that this is the true notion of a self-condemned man? Why we must believe it because you have said it: For you have given no reason, only asserted positively, that *this expression* 'Εκ τῆς στόματος σε κρινῶ σε, *out of thine mouth will I judge thee, is equivalent to saying, thou art αὐτοκατάκριτος* self-condemned. Whereas, I have shewn, from the very grammatical construction of the word *αὐτοκατάκριτος* †, that it respects the *action* of a guilty person condemning him-

* Second Letter, p. 35.

† See p. 47. the passage quoted from my first Letter.

self, and not the *cause* of a sentence passed on him by another : And it might reasonably be expected, that you should either have proved that this is not the proper meaning of the word, or *cannot* be so in the place where it is used by the apostle *Paul* ; before you affixed to it a strange and unheard of sense, foreign from its *derivation*, merely to serve an *hypothesis*.

To the gift of *discerning spirits*, about which so great a part of your answer is employed, I shall say but little.-----You still continue, I find, to think it strange, that the Apostles had it not (if it was *ever* exercised) when *Matthias* was chosen to the apostleship : Tho' the gifts of the Holy Ghost were not *then* communicated ; and it does not appear, whatever they had formerly when they were sent to execute a *particular* commission, that the Apostles were possessed, at *that* time, of any extraordinary and miraculous powers ; but on the contrary, as I hinted to you before, they were order'd to *tarry in the city of Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high*, Luke xxiv. 49.-----I observe likewise, that you cannot tell what to understand by the *διανόεις πνευμάτων*, the *discerning of spirits*, expressly mentioned as an extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. xii. 10 ; and yet you are not inclined (for no other reason that I can see, but because it will not suit your purpose) to admit my interpretation of the phrase, tho' it be perfectly *easy* and *natural*.-----The reader will further observe, that you seem quite confused when you speak about *knowing the heart*, and
searching

searching the heart *; which means no more than this in the present argument, that the Apostles had the knowledge of mens inward *sentiments* and *intentions* convey'd to them, in an *extraordinary* way, by the Holy Ghost. Whether this knowledge was communicated by a supernatural revelation of some *FACTS* which *discovered* the heart, or by an immediate *intuition* of it, the case, as every one must see, amounts to the same. The heart is known, by what we call *inspiration*, both ways; and the *one* may as properly be stiled the gift of discerning spirits, as the *other*; though you, Sir, in your great *metaphysical* subtilty, have attempted to strike out a *distinction* here †, where there is no real difference. And as you *do not undertake to determine* absolutely, *that the Apostles never had the power of knowing mens hearts* ‡; I shall presume to add, that you have given up the whole question when you say, that you *are not at all unwilling to admit*, that St. Peter, in the case of *Ananias and Sapphira*, might *know by revelation* for how much *the land was sold*; and of consequence that he *might and did know*, by revelation, *that Ananias and his wife were liars* ||: For if this be true, he must certainly have *known*, by revelation, the *hearts* of *Ananias and Sapphira* in this particular instance; which is all I ever contended for. For the question never was between us, in *what* particular manner the sentiments and intentions of mens hearts were made known; but only in *general*, whether they were *ever at*

* See Dr. Stebbing's Letter, p. 44.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid. p. 54.

|| Ibid. p. 44, 45.

all made known by revelation.----And this, you say in effect you *are not unwilling to admit* in the instance of *Ananias and Sapphira*.----And if by revelation likewise any *fact* was discovered to *Titus*, by which he *might* and *did* know, that a heretic was ἀποκατάρατος, *i. e. self-condemned*; this will answer my purpose full as well, and be as much the gift of *discerning spirits*, as an *immediate inspection* of the heart.

I told you in my first Letter, that I fixed on this way of removing your grand objection against my notion of heresy for this reason *only*, because I had seldom heard the gift of *discerning spirits*, in the manner in which I have stated it, disputed, and therefore thought it was a way that would be generally convincing and unexceptionable, and prevent an unnecessary *length* of controversy. But as it has in fact involved us in a tedious debate, quite *foreign* from the point of heresy (which is likely for ought I can see, if it be continued, to grow more prolix) I am determined to drop it here entirely, and let the argument upon this head rest as it now stands: only desiring the reader to review what I have wrote, and compare it with your answers, and then determine on which side, upon the whole, the greater *probability* lies. Whether *your* opinion or *mine* about the gift of *discerning spirits* be admitted, the main controversy between us will not be in *the least* affected by it: For heretics may be known *without* this gift; and I have never *once* asserted the contrary.

I allow, indeed, these to be my words----“How
“ can we *certainly* know, in *most cases* at least,
“ whether a man be a heretic or not? What
I “ rule

“ rule have we, *now* extraordinary illuminations
“ and assistances are ceased, &c? It is a point
“ of great *nicety* to judge of heresy in *particular*
“ instances.” The meaning of all which expressions, when considered and *compared* together, can amount to no more than this, That we may *suspect* and presume, but cannot *certainly* know, at least in *most cases*; That we have in *most cases*, or in *general*, no rule, *i. e.* no *sure* rule: And of consequence, That it is a point of great *nicety* to determine, in *particular* instances, who is, in the sense of St. Paul’s direction to *Titus*, a heretic. This, I say, is all that my words amount to when interpreted with the utmost *rigour*. But because I have not said the *absurdity* you would fain fasten upon me; because I have not given you some *ground* to triumph, by asserting *absolutely*, and in *universal* terms, that, without supernatural inspiration, or the gift of *discerning spirits*, heretics *cannot* be known; therefore the phrases in *most cases at least*, and it is a *point of great nicety*, which are, in truth, the very phrases which shew what was my real *sentiment*, must pass, in your *polite* stile, for *grimace*, and *shuffling*, and saving clauses. And you still, in your great modesty, seem *resolved* to insist upon it, that my opinion is, that heretics can *never* be known now extraordinary illuminations are *ceased*, both against *my self*, who should best understand my own sentiments, and in the face of *the world*, who have *public* evidence of the contrary. Whether any of the expressions abovementioned are too *strong*, (as perhaps they *are*) is a question we are not now engaged in: Nor is the dispute about the nature of
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of *heresy* at all concerned in it. 'Tis sufficient that not *one* of them will justify the *liberties* you have taken : And this is evident to a demonstration.

But you have even exceeded yourself, Sir, in the following sentence, in which you say, that I have *confessed in very strong terms*, That *none but those, who are endued with præternatural discernment, are FIT to decide in cases of heresy* *. This charge, you must pardon the expression, is absolutely *false*. The passage referred to is in the second part of my answer to the *Weekly Miscellany* †, where my words are, *And IF none, &c. i. e. allowing the objection urged by the author of the Miscellany to be rightly stated, or, taking it for granted, that, upon my notion of heresy, none but those, who are endued with a præternatural discernment, are fit to decide &c. this is no reflection on St. Paul, who hath never asserted the contrary.* I am here vindicating St. Paul's character, and endeavouring to shew, that if this point was never so *clear*, and *admitted* on both sides, it would be no disparagement to it. But is not this entirely different from *confessing it in strong terms*, or laying it down as *my own* opinion ? Can things, which are only *supposed* in argument, be justly said to be asserted absolutely ? Can what is not confessed *at all*, or in *any* terms, be said to be confessed *in strong terms* ? I repeat it once more, Sir, that it neither *is*, nor ever *was*, my sentiment, that heretics could not be known without the gift of *discerning spirits* : The passages you have produced out of my sermon are plain inti-

* Second Letter, p. 67.

† Old Whig, N^o. 15.

mations of the contrary: And I shall now proceed, for your complete satisfaction, to discuss this point with you upon the *reason* of the thing. In order to which I shall state your objection fairly, and then shew that it is weak and frivolous, and that, in the main of the argument, you have answered yourself.

Your chief difficulty with respect to my notion of heresy is this, That in order to know a *heretic*, we must know his *heart*; but it cannot even be suggested of uninspired men, that they can judge of mens hearts; and therefore, if (as you say, I maintain) none are to be rejected as heretics, but those who deny the faith against conviction, and there be no power in Being to discriminate such from the sincere and upright, the consequence is, That the right of rejecting heretics ceased with the miraculous gifts; and all exercise of such power, from that day to this, must be usurpation. You add, This consequence, Sir, was fully laid before you in my former Letter; and it was for the sake of this consequence, that I opposed your interpretation*. The objection rests entirely upon this, That heretics cannot be known to act with an evil intention, and against the convictions of their own minds, because the heart cannot be known, now (as you express it elsewhere) the gifts of inspiration are ceased†. And yet you contend in another place, That the inward subtilty, deceit, and malice of the heart of Elymas the sorcerer, and the principles and motives by which he was influenced, might have been known without an immediate

* Second Letter, p. 61.

† Ibid. p. 63.

divine revelation, and consequently in an age, when there were *no* gifts of inspiration, for this reason, because *every tree is known by its fruits*; and *evil deeds discover an evil heart* *. Here, Sir, you are unluckily caught in an irreconcilable contradiction, and *confuted* by your own pen. For if *evil deeds* discover an *evil heart*, we have *one* general rule, at least, by which to *know* the heart; and it may not only be *suggested*, but *affirmed*, of *uninspired* men, that *they can judge of the heart*. And thus, the *general ground* of your whole reasoning is entirely destroyed.

If you shall think fit to say, That *other trees* may be known by their *fruits*, but not an *heretical tree*; That the *evil hearts* of *other men* may be discovered by their *evil deeds*, but not the *evil heart* of a *heretic*; and that the subtilty, deceit, and malice of the *heart* of *Elymas* the forcerer, and the principles and motives by which *he* was influenced, might be judged of by his *conduct*, and from strong *circumstances* and *facts* that appeared against him, but that the corrupt intention and sinister views of the *heretic* cannot: I need only take notice, that this is changing the argument quite; which was not, that the heart of a heretic *alone* could not be known, but that the hearts of men, *universally*, cannot be judged of by persons *uninspired*. However if you shall still insist on this *emendation* in your reasoning, I shall leave it to the mercy of *common sense*, and think it unworthy a serious answer, till you have given some *marks*, which distinguish the hearts of *heretics* from *other*

* Second Letter, p. 45.

mens hearts; and offered your proofs, that they are the *only* hearts in the world, that are not discoverable by apparent *facts* and *circumstances*.

In truth, Sir, the troubling the world with a debate of this kind needs an apology. For to assert, that the *hearts* of men, or, which is the same, that their inward *intentions* and *dispositions*, and the *principles* and *views* from which they act, cannot be *known* but by divine inspiration, is asserting a direct contradiction to *reason* and *experience*; and arraigns the practice of all courts of *judicature*. Apply the same reasoning to the case of *malice prepense* in murder, if you have a mind to put it in a strong point of ridicule.--- But if the wilfulness and evil intention of a *murderer* may be known, there can be no *possible* reason in the nature of things, why the wilfulness and evil intention of a *heretic* may not likewise be known. By being *known*, I mean *judged of* with a great degree of *probability*: For as to an *infallible* knowledge who are heretics, it cannot be pretended to, without a *miraculous* illumination, upon *any* scheme. Nor is it at all necessary: For the word *Ἔιδως*, Knowing, *that he* --- *finneth*, and is *condemned of himself*, does not imply any such *strict* and *absolute* certainty, as all must be fully appriz'd of, who understand *Greek*.---And let the *church* but proceed on such *strong probabilities* in rejecting heretics, as *civil courts* proceed upon in trying and condemning criminals that are brought before them; and she will be much more secure from *mistake* and *rashness* in her censures, than it appears in *fact* she has ever yet been, since (as you phrase it) *the gifts of inspiration* ceased.

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An *immoral life*, I grant, is, *absolutely* and *in itself*, no certain proof that a heretic acts against *conviction*. But 'tis sufficient to invalidate the whole force of this objection, if, in any instances, *that* in conjunction with *other* circumstances may amount to sufficient evidence: For then it must be owned, in direct opposition to what you have so strenuously inculcated, that not only the *hearts* of men may be known, but the *evil intention* and *self-condemnation* of a heretic judg'd of likewise, by those who are not *inspired*. I shall therefore dismiss this topic for the present, and go on to remark farther on your general argument.——Why, according to you, Sir, is it a thing not to be *known*, when, upon my scheme, a man is a heretic? Because I suppose him to act against *conviction*. And why can we not *know*, that a man acts against conviction? Because *uninspired* men cannot judge of the *heart*. This is your *only* reason, and you have not attempted the least *shadow* of a proof besides this.——But you have *renounced* this only reason, and *allowed* that uninspired men may judge of the heart; and therefore, for any thing that you have yet alleged, they may judge likewise when a heretic is CONDEMNED BY HIS OWN MIND.

And effectually to prevent your having recourse to this shift, that might amuse and look somewhat plausible, *viz.* That tho' in many cases the *hearts* of men may be discerned, yet it is impossible to be known, now the gifts of inspiration are ceased, when a man is inwardly *condemned by himself*; to prevent, I say, your taking sanctuary here, you have *plainly allowed*, that
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we may know, without any extraordinary gift, that he is inwardly condemned by himself, by granting that I have given an instance in which I may *infallibly be certain, that he knows himself to be in the wrong* *. — But you say, what *I have mentioned is a case of immorality; but a case of heresy I have not named*. What evasion and trifling is here? Heresy is, and must be in my opinion, a case of IMMORALITY. Besides your argument was *general*, that it could not be *known* without inspiration, when men acted against *conviction*. I have proved the contrary to a demonstration by an uncontestable instance, as you yourself *acknowledge*: And could any thing more be necessary to shew your argument to be weak and inconclusive? You are I see, Sir, dreadfully pinched with this case, and would fain get rid of it, but cannot: For if I may be *infallibly certain*, without supernatural illumination, that *any* immoral men are self-condemned; why may I not be *sure* likewise in some cases, at least, why may I not in many cases have your *probable* proof (which is all my argument requires) that a *heretic* is self-condemned? Is the latter the *only* point that cannot be known without a *miracle*? If you had thought so, you should have stated the argument in *that form*, and then I might have offered another sort of reply. But as I am firmly persuaded that you will not be able to prove, that heretics are the *only* persons who cannot be known to act against *conviction*, and that you have too much regard to your own reputation ever to attempt it; I consider your cal-

* Second Letter, p. 65.

ling out for a *case of heresy* only as *throwing dust*, to blind the reader, and perplex the controversy.

I must take the liberty to put you in mind, Sir, that I have declared it to be my present opinion, that 'tis not *absolutely essential* to the character of a heretic, that he depart from the faith, any otherwise, than as every *error in practice* may be called departing from the faith; which is not what you mean by the expression. The *only* thing, therefore, that I am obliged to prove, in order to support my argument, is this: That when the leaders and abettors of particular *heresies*, or *sects*, pretend a zeal for religion, and for the advancement and honour of christianity, we may have *probable evidence* in many instances, that they intend only their private advantage, or the gratifying their vanity, or some other inordinate passion. This, I say, is the *only* thing that I am obliged to prove: For if they mean not *religion*, but *interest*, it necessarily follows, that in pretending *religion* they must act against *knowledge* and the inward *conviction* of their minds; and of consequence, be in the strict sense of the word ΑΥΤΟΚΑΤΑΚΡΙΤΟΙ, or SELF-CONDEMNED.— And if you shall think it proper once more to insist upon *particular cases*, where the point in *general* is so plain; I here promise, when you have answered what I have already offered, to give you all the satisfaction you can desire. But I have no inclination to attempt it *before*, because it is entirely unnecessary, and can only serve to draw out the controversy to an unreasonable length; since the *possibility* of the thing itself must be universally

fally *acknowledged*, and *particular instances* will readily occur to every ones reflections.

The result of the whole is, that admitting *my* notion to be true, heretics may be *known*, and, upon *good probable* evidence *rejected*, in *all* ages of the church.----But how can they be known upon *yours*?-----How can the heretic's character be determined with the *lowest* degree of *probability*, when it has been clearly proved, That departing from the faith, which upon your scheme is *heresy*, is a phrase of a loose ambiguous indeterminate meaning, of which no distinct and uniform idea can *possibly* be framed? This objection therefore, which has been magnified as insuperable, turns directly against *yourself*: And I expect that you will be more impartial, than to continue to urge it against *my* account of heresy, unless you endeavour to shew at the same time, that *your own* is not *equally*, is not *more strongly*, pressed by it.

I must not omit to consider a very strange and frightful consequence, which, you tell me, upon *my principles*, cannot be *avoided*. It is this: *That there ought to be no exercise of church-discipline, even with respect to immoralities; if those who do them shall have confidence enough to justify themselves* *. How you came to dream of such an enthusiastic consequence I cannot imagine; and let every reader judge what real ground there is for it, from the following just representation of the case. St. Paul has described a heretic as one that is *condemned of himself*; which I explained in this

* Second Letter, p. 64.

manner,

manner, adhering to the natural and obvious sense of the phrase, *one that acts against the judgment and conviction of his own mind*. Now the *only* pertinent conclusion that results from hence is, that no man ought to be rejected as St. Paul's heretic, and in pursuance of this rule which he prescribed to Titus, but one that is *condemned of himself*, or that acts against *conviction*. And what is the reason why he cannot be justly censured as a *heretic*, unless he appears to be *self-condemned*? This and this *only*; that St. Paul hath given that *precise* description and character of the heretic, who is to be censured and avoided. But can it be seriously believed by any man in his senses, that because I cannot reject him under the name of a *heretic*, whose character an inspired apostle has expressly *defined*, he may not be rejected under *any* immoral character whatever? The *self-condemnation*, Sir, you will be pleased to observe, I never made necessary to the rejecting and avoiding the *sinner*, then indeed you would have drawn your consequence like a reasoner; but only to the censuring and avoiding the *heretic*, a sinner of an *express* and *determinate* character. Having dispatch'd the main branches of the controversy, I shall examine the texts that relate to the *indifferent* use of the word heresy.

The first passage is 1 Cor. xi. 19. *For there must be also heresies among you, that they who are approved may be made manifest*. The rule upon which I proceeded in my interpretation of this text is this, that when words are in themselves of a *general indefinite* signification, it must be contrary to all just rules of criticism to *limit* their meaning with-

out some obvious reason for it; because if it may be *limited*, i. e. *restrained* to a good or bad sense without a reason, it may be quite *altered* without a reason. This was what I intended in my first Letter; though I allow the thing itself was more loosely expressed. And upon this foundation I attempted, as I told you, to give the meaning of St. Paul's words in the following paraphrase: *That, considering the various tempers of men, their different views, passions, prejudices, their selfishness, ambition, vanity and the like; 'twas natural to expect that they would divide into parties about religion, as well as about politics, and the civil affairs of life: And that the providence of God wisely permitted this for the trial of their integrity; that the real friends of truth, persons of an honest, inquisitive, and ingenuous temper, might be made manifest; and distinguished from the indolent, careless, and insincere.*

You will please to observe, Sir, that my only design in this paraphrase was to shew, that the word heresy may here retain its *general* meaning; and that the understanding it thus *generally* will *completely* answer the end, for which the apostle says, *there must be heresies*. If this be the case, there neither *is*, nor *can* be, the least colour of reason for confining it either to a good or bad sense. And no judicious and sober critic would ever affirm, that the limited sense *will do full as well*, when it does not appear from any thing in the passage he is explaining, that the author designed his sense should be so *limited*. He would not confine the *extent*, and consequently the *use*, of moral observations, only because he fancies they *may*,
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though he has no ground to believe that they *ought to be*, so confined; nor, if he was a person of a candid and impartial disposition, would he do this to promote any secular purposes, or support a favourite scheme.

As an answer to all this you tell me, that *I ought to have said, that when a word is capable of more senses than one, the precise meaning, be it good, bad, or indifferent, must be determined by the circumstances of the place; and if the circumstances leave the matter uncertain, to determine either the one way or the other, is to build upon presumption and fancy**. But the truth is, as every reader will easily see, that though the good and bad, which are *particular* senses, arise entirely from circumstances; yet nothing more is necessary to fix and ascertain the *general indefinite* sense, but the *want* of circumstances that lead to, and fix, the *limited* sense. And no man, surely, will pretend to say, that because a word is sometimes taken in a bad sense when circumstances evidently require it, it may therefore be taken in a bad sense when *no one* circumstance requires it; because this is saying in effect, that we are equally justified in altering the general meaning of words, and confining them to particular senses, when we have *no* reason for it, as when we have *one*.

And indeed, at length, you seem to be sensible, that, in order to write pertinently, you must endeavour to shew, either that the general indefinite notion of heresy will not suit the apostle's design in the *passage itself* which we are now con-

* Second Letter, p. 10.

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* Second Letter, p. 10.

sidering;

sidering; or that there are some other things in the *context* and the course of his reasoning, plainly relating to the *same* point, that oblige us to take it in a criminal, *i. e.* a *restrained*, sense. I am therefore called upon to *see, whether circumstances will not help to fix the notion of heresy in this place.* And what are these circumstances? Why upon examination they are all found to dwindle away into one little *particle*, which is magnified by your fancy into a word of that great importance, as to decide the whole controversy.---Δὲ γὰρ καὶ &c. *The καὶ here (you say) is emphatical*.*---But you have offered no proof to support your assertion, and the observation itself deserves, I think, but little notice: However, I shall make two or three brief remarks upon it. And First, Every one that is conversant in the *Greek* language must know, that the particle καὶ, in a multitude of places, and especially in the New Testament has no such clear and *emphatical* meaning as you affix to it. Secondly, He must know likewise, that when the words γὰρ καὶ and καὶ γὰρ, are used, the καὶ appears sometimes to have no such *emphasis*, as either to intimate that a *distinct* subject is treated of as you suppose in the present case, or to add any considerable weight and strength to the reasoning. And it must evidently appear to such a one, that you are hard pressed, and reduced to the necessity of catching at every little prop, when you build your interpretations of Scripture on nothing else but the *precise* and *em-*

* Second Letter, p. 11.

phatical meaning of a *single* particle, the signification of which so often varies.

But to come more directly to the point: In *Coloss. ii. 5.* if the *καὶ* has any determinate meaning, *γὰρ καὶ* most probably signifies the same with *καὶ γὰρ*, *and because*, or *because also*. The whole passage stands thus: *This, I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.* Then immediately follows, as another reason, *ἐν γὰρ καὶ* *because also*, *though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.* And thus I think it natural (as the words will easily bear this sense) to understand *1 Cor. xi. 19.* into the sense of which we are enquiring. *I hear*, says St. Paul, *that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it; i. e. upon the report and intelligence which I have received: Δὲν γὰρ καὶ αἰρέσεις* *and because, or because also, there must be heresies among you.* Which is as if he had said, I am confirmed in the belief of the *information* that has been given me by the knowledge I have of human nature, and of the state and circumstances of the world: Taking mankind as they really are, 'tis but reasonable to expect that they will divide into *heresies*, i. e. *sects* or *parties* about religion, as well as about other matters. According to this account the Apostle's meaning is clear, the propriety of his reasoning is preserved, the particle *καὶ* is allowed all the *emphasis* that belongs to it; and yet the word *heresy*, or *sect*, retains its *general* meaning. I shall only add, that if I *now* understand you, you appear in your first Letter to have entirely

irely mistaken the nature of my argument, and still continue in the mistake, imagining, that I took *the Apostle's speaking of heresies, as things permitted by God for the trial of mens integrity*, to be a proof *that heresy is used in an indifferent sense* *. Whereas so strange a fancy never once entered into my thoughts, as that nothing could be permitted for the trial of mens integrity, but what was of an *indifferent* nature; or that the very *form and manner* of expression, used by *St. Paul*, could not be made to agree with the *bad* sense of heresy, or necessarily required the *indifferent* sense. But the single point I had in view was to shew, that there was not the least ground in the *expression* itself, or the *nature* of the thing, nor any shadow of reason to be assigned, for departing from the *general* sense of the word, and confining its signification either to *good* or *bad* sects. And from hence it follows, that though I judg'd wrong with respect to your intention in putting the case of *gluttony and drunkenness being substituted in the room of heresy*; yet it still appears, that the case itself is not at all to your purpose, because it is grounded entirely on the unaccountable *mistake* above-mentioned. Had I indeed argued in the way you have presumed, *i. e.* that *the Apostle's merely speaking of heresies, as things permitted by God for the trial of mens integrity*, was an evidence *that heresy is used in an indifferent sense*; a more clear and uncontestable proof could not (as you say) be given,

* Second Letter, p. 8.

that

that this is no evidence, than to shew, that if instead of mentioning heresies, he had mentioned something else in terms which always carry with them a bad meaning, the propriety of his reasoning would have been exactly the same. But as I never intended the absurd thing you have imagined for me, your supposition stands just as it did before—quite wide from the argument.

I now proceed to consider briefly *Acts* xxiv. 5. where St. Paul is said to be a ringleader of the sect, or heresy, of the Nazarenes. As this speech came from the mouth of Tertullus the Orator, who was accusing him before Felix, you thought you had reason to conclude, that the word heresy was used as a term of reproach, and consequently in a bad sense *. In answer to which I produced a parallel, taken from the use of the word party in our own language, in which it would appear plainly to every reader how strangely a writer must have trifled, that had used the same kind of reasoning. And what reply, Sir, have you made to this? Have you endeavoured to shew either that what I have put is not a parallel case? Or, that the word party varies from its usual meaning in the one instance, as the word heresy is supposed to do in the other? Or have you attempted to give any one convincing reason, why the word heresy may not retain its general signification in the scripture-instance, as well as the word party in the supposition? This you ought to have done: But you thought it more prudent to take another method, and have not so much as vouchsafed to

* Second Letter, p. 11.

recite the parallel itself; on which the stress of the argument depends; and by the help of which *alone*, every man of common understanding may easily discern, that all you have offered is mere flight and amusement.

The substance of your defence is as follows. 1st, You ask me, *Who ever said, or thought, that it was the design of Tertullus to reproach St. Paul for adhering to a sect, i. e. a sect indefinitely, or at large?* And then you add, *He charges him with being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and so I have cited him.* To which I need only answer, that by citing his words fairly, you have produced evidence against yourself: For I must still insist upon it, That *the sect of the Nazarenes* may be a reproachful phrase, even though the word *sect*, or *heresy*, preserves its general meaning. They are, as I told you before, *the epithets and characters made use of to distinguish the sect, that convey all that is ignominious in the idea.*----- But you enquire again, *How is it possible that a word should retain its general meaning, when it is distinguished by circumstances which limit it to a particular sense *?* You would have stated the matter more justly, if you had said, *How is it possible that a word should retain its general meaning, when it has some bad character or epithet joined to it?* This is the question as it ought to have been put; and can you really think, that it deserves a serious answer? If you do, I then ask, by way of reply, *How is it possible, that*

* Second Letter, p. 12.

the word *party* should preserve its common and usual signification, when it is distinguished by such a bad name as *Republican*? Or, when we speak of a selfish, ambitious, revengeful man, How is it possible, that the term *man* should retain its general meaning, with such *reproachful* epithets annexed to it? To use your own words, with a little variation: *You may --- refine, and say, that the bad idea arises, not from the word man, but from the characters which stand connected with it. But a cause is not worth a single rush that hangs upon such niceties as these. Let the bad idea arise whence it will, I say, that man, thus connected, is always---a term of reproach; i. e. the word man itself loses its general meaning, and is limited to a particular sense. And whereas, you tell me, that you know not--- what can be meant by saying, that heresy is used in a bad sense, but this, that it is applied particularly to some sect, either bad, or esteemed to be bad; I answer, that this expression is certainly capable of some other meaning, or of no just meaning at all: For your reasoning here is truly admirable, and comes out thus, That nothing can be meant, by saying, that the word heresy, or sect, is used in a bad sense but this, That some heresy, or sect, either bad, or esteemed to be bad, is stiled a heresy or sect. And so again, man, (i. e. the word itself) must, by this rule, be used in a bad sense, whenever any man, either bad, or esteemed to be bad, is stiled a man. Nay, further, the word animal must be used in a bad sense likewise, whenever any living thing, either*

bad, or supposed to be bad, is stiled an animal. But I dismiss these trifles, and go on

To the last text. *Acts xxviii. 22. For as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.* Upon which you say, that you thought it sufficient to ask this short question; *Do you not consider that this speech comes from the mouth of a Jew *?* Yes, Sir, I have considered this, but still think your question to be very absurd; because it supposes, that no *Jew* could use the word *sect* with respect to Christians in its general sense. You are pleased to tell me, that in my Answer, I have *granted* something; but that something will be found, upon examination, to amount to very little: For what have I granted? — Why that if *these had been prejudiced persecuting Jews, they might, perhaps, have used the word heresy as a term of reproach.* Perhaps, indeed, they might, and perhaps they might not; since no reason can be assigned, why even a prejudiced *Jew* might not speak of Christians as a *sect* in the general sense of the word, as well as a friend to Monarchy may, when he is speaking of the *Republican* party, say, that it is a party generally reproached and *spoken against*, without departing from the *common* signification of *that* term.

All therefore that you have offered, against the *honesty, openness, and candour* of these *Jews*, might as well have been omitted; and I should have troubled myself no farther about it, if you had not represented the history itself very lamely and

* Second Letter, p. 14.

partially. This, I think, must appear undeniably from the following brief remarks. First, That those who met St. *Paul*, when these words were spoken, were only *the chief of the Jews* residing at *Rome*, as is expressly asserted in the 17th verse. But, Secondly, *When they*, i. e. the chief of the *Jews* together with St. *Paul*, had appointed a day, we are told that *MANY came*; which *MANY* may very reasonably and fairly be supposed to have consisted, not only of all the principal *Jews* with whom the apostle had *before* conversed, but of *several others* besides them. If you had not judged it convenient to conceal this material circumstance, That in the *first* meeting the *chief of the Jews* only were engag'd, but that *all* of them, and many more, might have been present at the *second* conference; every common reader must have immediately seen, that your low criticism on the word *many* (viz. *it should therefore seem that ALL did not come*) was entirely groundless. Besides it is well known, that the word Πλείονες signifies not many in *opposition* or *contradistinction* to all, but a large number; and then the fact will stand thus, that when the principal *Jews* had fixed a time for St. *Paul* to give an account of Christianity, a *great company* resorted to his *lodging*. Thirdly, The *Jews* who were *first* called together, and appointed the *second* meeting, might for any thing that appears from the history, be but *few* in number, and as we are directly informed, that *MANY came*, all those chief *Jews*, and *others* of the *many* besides, might be among *the some* that *believed*: And there might still remain a *greater* number of those who *believed not* ---- which might give St. *Paul* just occasion

caſion to apply to them in the words of *Eſaias*, ver. 25, 26, 27. and warn them that the word of God was taken from them. So that you are not able to prove, if you confine yourſelf ſtrictly to the circumſtances which the *hiſtorian* has related, that the *Jews*, who, in the *fiſt* converſation joined in repreſenting Chriſtians as a ſect, were prejudiced *Jews*; or that they were not, the *greateſt* part at leaſt, if not *all*, of them, perſons of ingenuity and candour. However, as was intimat- ed before, it is not very material whether they were or not; becauſe, upon *either* ſuppoſition, they might uſe the word ſect or hereſy, in its *ge- neral* ſenſe. To all which I may add, that it is neither a *generous* nor an *equitable* thought, to imagine concerning perſons, of whom no ill can be clearly and directly proved, that being deſtitute of honeſty, and enſlaved to prejudice, they had *condemned* the cauſe of Chriſtianity before they *underſtood* it; and had done this at that very time, when they profeſſed a *deſire* to hear it explained, and ſhewed a *diſpoſition* to examine it, ver. 22.

But to proceed: You have ſaid in your *fiſt* Letter *, That though *αἵρεσις* in the general notion of it ſignifies a ſect indefinitely, yet *αἱρετικος* (a he- retic) is evermore pinned down to a bad ſenſe, as every common Engliſh reader knows. This I thought a very ſtrange and myſterious obſerva- tion; and could ſcarce perſuade myſelf, that any one of the ſenſes, in which I ſuppoſed it *capable* of being underſtood, was the thing you really in- tended. I therefore out of tenderneſs and com-

plaisance would fix nothing upon you as your direct and certain meaning, but put some *queries* to you, that you might have an opportunity of explaining your own sense. And for nothing else, but this fair and candid method of proceeding, you have charged me with *mean cavilling*, and attempted, by a complaint of ill usage, to move the *compassion* of your readers. At length however you have cleared up the difficulty, and informed me, *that the purport of this passage was to shew, that in the use of the Greek word αἰρετικός and the English word a heretic, there is no variation, and that both are constantly used in a bad sense**. And to support this observation, you ask, *Does not a heretic in English always signify one who (in the opinion of the person who uses that expression) holds some erroneous doctrine?* I believe not; but however for the present it shall be allowed.——*Is not the Greek word αἰρετικός (in that single passage in which it occurs in the New Testament) used in the same manner? i. e. to signify one likewise, who holds some erroneous doctrine?* Whether it be really so or no, let that likewise be granted. But what advantage can be made of all this? If you aim at nothing more by it (as I imagine is the case) than to shew, that the *English* word, and the *Greek* word when it occurs in St. Paul's epistle to *Titus*, are both used in a *bad* sense, you cannot but know, Sir, notwithstanding the liberty you have taken to *complain*, that I *actually supposed*, among other things, that this might be the intent and scope of your reasoning. You must be

* Second Letter, p. 17.

apprized also, that I put this question to you, Whether a common English reader (whom you determine to be a competent judge of the case) or any reader can know, that because αἰεῖλος is never used but once in the New Testament, and then it is in a bad sense, it could never have been used on a proper occasion in an indifferent sense; though αἰρεσις, from whence it is derived, is confessed to have an indifferent meaning; and the indifferent use of αἰρεσιάρχος [an heresiarch] a word of a much stronger sense than αἰεῖλος [a heretic] frequently occurs in Greek authors. But though you have taken no notice of this, I must do you the justice to own that you have not passed by the quotation I brought from Suidas, in which he stiles the Pyrrhonists heretics, who embraced the opinions of Pyrrho; using the word αἰεῖλος in the same indifferent sense with αἰρεσις. This passage, which I thought directly to the point, you assert is not to the purpose; because you never said, that the word αἰεῖλος, howsoever coupled with other words, would not bear an indefinite sense; but that αἰεῖλος (absolutely) a heretic always carries a bad sense. To which I answer, that the last clause is not what you asserted before, but something very different: For your first passage had not the word *absolutely*. But without inquiring farther what was your original meaning, I shall briefly collect the sum of the argument on both sides.—My argument was this only, that from the general indifferent use of the word αἰρεσις it plainly follows, that the general notion of a heretic is no more than this, one that sets up to be the head, or chuses to join himself to a particular

lar religious sect. I never insisted, that the word *αἰετῖνος* was used thus *indifferently* in the New Testament; but *only*, that it is the proper *general* sense of the word, in which sense it *might* have been used. To this you reply, that it happens, indeed, to be used but *once* in the New Testament; and then it has a *bad* meaning. And from hence it must follow (if your argument concludes any thing at all against what I have asserted) either, that there is no *general* sense of the word *αἰετῖνος*, or, if there be, that it could not have been as properly used in a *general indefinite* sense, as in a *particular bad* sense. But the *one*, or the *other*, of these, you have not attempted to prove, and cannot prove. And therefore I shall add no more, but leave you to make the most of this ingenious observation, That *αἰετῖνος* (*a heretic*) is evermore [i. e. *ONCE* in the New Testament, and always in *English*] pinned down to a *bad* sense, as every common English reader knows. Though, after all, the common *English* reader can answer only for what relates to his own language, which is but *one* part of the remark; and, I believe, will find himself as much at a loss what application to make of the *whole*, as to settle the other part relating to the *Greek* word *αἰετῖνος*. I shall conclude with adding two things.

First, Whereas you seem very solicitous to know, upon what plan I would desire the *visible church* of Christ to be formed; I answer, that it is my opinion, that no faith ought to be explicitly requir'd in order to *Christian* communion, or to the communion of *Christians* considered as *such* (and this is the only *communion* that is recommended in the New

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Testament)

Testament) but what is necessary to denominate a man a *Christian*. If, indeed, we were speaking of the communion of particular *sects* and *parties*, (whether *Athanasians*, *Socinians*, or *Calvinists*) their discriminating sentiments would be the *proper* qualification; but we speak of the communion of the *Church*, i. e. of the *Christian Church*; and in this case, whatever *faith* (so far as *faith* will do it) constitutes the *Christian* character, must of course determine the right to *communion*. And this I apprehend, to be the only possible centre of *unity* between the several parts of the *Catholic Church*. You have enquired of me, by what, upon my scheme, *the visible church of Christ* is to be *held together as a society*? And you have now my answer---By a union in the *necessary* faith of Christians, and by charity and mutual forbearance, and the conscientious and regular exercise of all Christian virtues---- Not by a unity of *opinion*, which is next to impossible; nor by a uniformity of *profession*, which can in many cases be nothing else but *hypocrisy*. But it may be objected, that if this Rule should take place, we shall be reduced to the hard fate (as some may esteem it) of having CHRISTIAN Churches only. *No matter for that*; because by this the interest of *true Christianity* must undoubtedly be advanced, whatever *other* interest suffers. But you will be apt to ask, What then will become of *all Religious Settlements**? I answer, that the *Christian Church*, considered merely *as such*, will be the more firmly established; and if you mean any thing by

* Dr. Stebbing's Second Letter, p. 83.

Religious Settlements, but such Settlements as are framed upon the express *model* prescribed in the Gospel—*I care not what becomes of them.* To this you will likewise be inclined to add, what will become of all *confessions of faith*, *whether they concern clergy, or laity; whether required by national churches, or separate congregations?* * To which I answer again, that this is a thing which I am not at all concerned about.—And why should you? — Are not the Holy Scriptures themselves a sufficient *standard* and *test* of right belief? If we say they *are not*, we reproach and vilify the Scriptures; and if they *are*, what need is there of *other* tests? Are the public *Articles* and *Confessions* of *National Churches*, or of *Separate Congregations*, of equal authority with the sacred and infallible oracles of divine truth? Or do they give a more *exact* and *plain* account of the doctrines of Christianity, than the New Testament itself contains? Is, for instance, what is *commonly called the creed of St. Athanasius* more clear and *illuminating* with respect to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, than the writings of the inspired Apostles? Or ought it to be deemed a more *proper* test only for this reason because it is profoundly and transcendently mysterious, and, by any human understanding, unfathomable?—For my own part I make no scruple to declare, that I can scarce wish for a greater happiness here upon earth, than this, to see the time, when *all* true Christians shall unite in *one Catholic* communion; and when (if *any* subscription at all be

* Second Letter, p. 83.

expedient) a subscription to the *New Testament*, joined with credible marks of a sincere and pious mind, shall be esteemed a sufficient *purgation* from *heresy*.

I think it proper to add in the second place, that if this controversy continues, whenever you shall be pleased to assume the airs of a friend to *liberty*, and an enemy to *persecution*, I shall look upon it as my duty (being desirous that you may exhibit a *consistent* character) to be your faithful *monitor*, and put you in mind of the 9th chapter of the ALCHORAN *; that, if possible, I may prevail upon you to renounce, publicly, that vile *persecuting* part of MAHOMET'S doctrine which you have heretofore espoused; and which, I am persuaded, you can never prove to be either agreeable to principles of *reason*, or to the gentle and beneficent spirit of the *Gospel*. I am,

S I R,

Oct. 6. 1736.

Yours, &c.

James Foster.

* N. B. Here it is, that the impostor *Mahomet* ordains a *pecuniary mulct* (which Dr. *Stebbing* also has lately recommended in his *Polemical tracts*) to be exacted from every one that dissents from the established religion, as a *composition*, a *tribute*, for his *liberty*.



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